SPURGEON'S SERMONS



VOLUME 1

GEN.–EXOD.

CHARLES SPURGEON

Spurgeon's Sermons

Vol. 01 - Gen.-Exod.

Charles Spurgeon

Monergism Books

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These sermons have been taken from an older (and looks to be abandoned) website called The Kingdom Collective. It appears there has been no activity on it since 2014. I tried to reach out to the listed site creator, but to no avail. There isn't any copyright indicator on that site, but it does let you know the sermons there are edited by Emmett O'Donnell. Mr. O'Donnell allows books to be made of his edited sermons as long as they are unaltered, and freely-distributed. His exact copyright policy (as noted on the Spurgeon Gems site) is listed with attribution in the copyright section of each eBook. The sermons in this series are put into Genesis-Revelation order based on the text of each sermon, so that, it can be used as a "Through the Bible" Series, a Commentary, and the entire Collection of his Sermons (within the 63 Vol.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Series.) Being that one of the requirements of distribution, is that the text remain unaltered, this means that the text is exactly as transcribed on the site; so, there may be errors present, as is the common case in all human endeavors. Please forgive these. The sermons that have no scripture references, are located in the last volume as the last sermons, and are noted by “N/S.” While Spurgeon’s Sermons usually take up 63 Vols. this collection will be 36 Vols. as there are around 100 sermons in each Vol. We would like to express our deepest gratitude for both The Kingdom Collective and Spurgeon Gems for making this collection possible.

S.D.G. - Monergism

Ge 1:1-5 • Light, Natural and Spiritual

SERMON 0660

L*ight—Natural And Spiritual*

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void. And darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day."

Genesis 1:1-5

THIS is, no doubt, a literal and accurate account of God's first day's work in the creation of the world, but the first creation is not the subject of this morning's discourse–we would rather direct your

minds to the second creation of God. Every man who is saved by Divine Grace is a new creation. The great work which Jesus Christ is accomplishing in the world, by the Holy Spirit through the Word, is the making all things new. We believe the old creation to have been typical of the new and we shall so use it. May we all be taught of the Lord while so doing.

Observe, dear Friends, the state of the world. It is said to have been "without form and void. And darkness was upon the face of the deep." Such is the state of every human heart till God the Holy Spirit visits it. So far as spiritual things are concerned, the human heart is in a state of chaos and disorder. There is no thought of faith, of love, of hope, of obedience–it is a spiritually confused mass of dead sinfulness in which everything is misplaced. It is void or utterly empty. Search the human heart through and it is true of it as Paul says, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing."

Over the whole, as in the old creation a thick darkness reigns, comparable to that of Egypt–a darkness that might be felt. This is true of all men–not of the ignorant in the lowest haunts of London, whose depraved parentage and education have prevented them from knowing Divine things–but this is true of those who are trained up under the sound of the Gospel and whose morals are good and exemplary. They are still darkness, naturally, until God the Holy Spirit comes to renew them.

In the whole world, whether it is among kings, statesmen, or Divines, there is not one who has so much as a spark of spiritual light unless he has received it from above. And he can only have received it from above through Him who is "the true Light which lights every man which comes into the world," who is enlightened at all. Dark, dark, dark is the whole of humanity–it dwells in the black darkness of sin and must perish there unless the same Divine power which said, "Let there be light," of old, shall bestow spiritual light. You observe that the first Divine action in connection with the formation and shaping of the world, was this–"The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

The secret work of the Holy Spirit begins in the human heart–we cannot always say precisely when or how. "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell from where it comes and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." In the hearts of God's chosen ones this Spirit works mysteriously and silently, but most efficaciously. The expression translated, "moved upon," conveys in the original the idea of a bird brooding over its nest. The Holy Spirit mysteriously quickens the dead heart, excites emotions, longings, desires.

It may be some of you are feeling His operations this morning. You have not yet received the Divine light, but there are workings of the Divine energy in your spirit. You are not easy in your present lost estate–you are discontented to be what you now are–you are

desirous to enter into God's marvelous light. For this I thank God and take it as a hopeful symptom. And I pray that He may, this morning, if it is His gracious will, lead you farther and make you feel today that early operation of Divine Grace by which light is given to the darkened soul.

In considering the text, we shall notice FIRST THE DIVINE FIAT. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. The Lord Himself needs no light to enable Him to discern His creatures–

"Darkness and light in this agree,
Great God they're both alike to You."

He looked upon the darkness and resolved that He would transform its shapeless chaos into a fair and lovely world. We shall observe that the work of Grace by which light enters the soul is a needed work. God's plan for the sustaining of vegetable and animal life rendered light necessary. Light is essential to life. There are few operations which can be carried on in the world without some degree of light and certainly no heart can be saved without spiritual light.

It is light, my Brethren, which first shows us our lost estate–for we know nothing of it naturally. We think that we are righteous, that all is well with our souls. But when the Divine light comes in, we discover that we are fallen in Adam and are terribly undone! Naturally we think that we are no worse than others, that if we have offended, our offenses are very venial and almost deserve to be

pardoned. But when light enters, the exceeding sinfulness of sin is discovered. This causes pain and anguish of heart–but that pain and anguish are necessary in order to bring us to lay hold on Jesus Christ–whom the light next displays to us.

No man ever knows Christ till the light of God shines on the Cross. You may look at a picture of the bleeding Jesus. You may read the story of His wounds, but you have not seen Christ–so as to be saved by His death–unless the light of His Spirit has revealed Him to you as the great Substitute for sinners, the Surety of the new Covenant, and suffering in your place. You know Him not unless the mysterious light has led you to read these words as your own, "He loved me and gave Himself for me."

We can see neither our state, nor our sin, nor our Savior without light. You who worship God but are not converted, are like the men of Athens who worshipped an unknown God. You do not feel Him to be a real existence. You do not come near to Him. You have no true love to Him. You cannot cry, "Abba Father." You are not made partakers of the Divine nature. And you can never be brought near to God unless heavenly light shall manifest God to you as your God who in eternal purposes chose you to be His, and by the gift of His dear Son has bought you to be His forever.

The great truths of Heaven, Hell, and immortality are not clearly perceived till the light shines on them. But you receive them as matter of settled doctrine because you have been taught them from

your youth up–He who brings life and immortality to light is Christ Jesus and, without the light, life and immortality are mere names–not real things to you.

Beloved, if we could save men by the application of drops of water, or by giving them bread and wine to eat and drink! If we were so besotted as to believe that souls could be affected by physical substances and that the hearts of men could be renewed by external observances, there would be no need of light! But ours is a religion which appeals to the understanding, which acts upon the will, which moves the heart–where little can be done with men while they are in spiritual darkness. They must have light, or else they cannot see. And if they cannot see, they cannot receive–for looking to Jesus is the Gospel mode of receiving. So, Beloved, the making of light was absolutely necessary in the world and the creation of God's light in the heart of man is a most necessary work.

Next observe it was a very early work. Light was created on the first day, not on the third, fourth, or sixth, but on the first day. And one of the first operations of the Spirit of God in a man's heart is to give light enough to see his lost estate and to perceive that he cannot save himself from it but must look elsewhere. Come, dear Hearer, have you seen the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Are you resting upon Him as all your salvation and all your desire? Have you light enough to look to Him and be saved, leaving all

your former boasting, nailing them all to His Cross and taking Him to be your All in All?

It is a very early work of Divine Grace, I say, to show you that you are a sinner and to reveal to you that you have a Savior! It is the first day's work and I have no right to believe myself to be a new creature in God at all unless I have received light enough to know those two great and weighty facts–myself lost in Adam but saved in the second Adam–undone by sin but restored by the Savior's righteousness! It is well for us to remember that light-giving is a Divine work. God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

O Beloved, how often have I said it and there has been no light whatever! These eyes have often wept over benighted souls, but my glistening tears could not give them a ray of light! Have I not bowed my knee and prayed full many a time for the conversion of men and though prayer has power because it links man with God, yet in itself it has none, for our prayers for others can do nothing whatever for them till Jehovah Himself says, "Let there be light." Dear Hearer, the Lord must come into distinct and direct contact with your spirit or else your darkness will become the outer darkness of eternal ruin!

Speak of what your free will can do–of what your creature ability can do–alas, these can do nothing whatever for you! They will plunge you deeper and deeper into the blackness of darkness

forever. But into the light of God you never can come and never will come, unless that eternal voice shall say, “Let there be light.” Let us always remember this in preaching the Gospel and never depend upon man, or upon the Word alone, but be this our prayer, “Oh God, do Your work, for You alone can do so effectually.” This Divine work is worked by the Word. God did not sit in solemn silence and create the light–He spoke. He said, “Light be,” and light was. So the way in which we receive light is by the Word of God. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Christ Himself is the essential Word and the preaching ofChrist Jesus is the operative Word. We receive Christ actually when God’s power goes with God’s Word–then we have light. Therefore the necessity of continually preaching the Word of God! If I preach my own word, no light will go with it. But when it is God’s Word, then I may expect that light will follow. Oh, to preach Christ’s Cross! My Brothers, choose no ministry but that which savors much of God’s Word and especially of the Word Christ Jesus! Better to preach one sermon full of Christ, than a thousand in which He shall be left out.

“I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.” The great magnet and loadstone of Gospel attraction is Christ Himself! And if we leave Him out, it is as though we should expect the world to receive light without the Almighty Word. While light was conferred in connection with the mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit, it

was unaided by the darkness itself. How could darkness assist to make itself light? No, the darkness never did become light. It had to give place to light, but darkness could not help God.

If your understanding could resolve darkness into its elements, can you see anything in it which can help to bring the day? If you can, I cannot. Look at your own fallen nature–is there anything there which could assist in the great work of salvation? If you think so, you know not yourself. The power which saves a sinner is not the power of man. The power of man must die, for its only use is to stand out as far as it is able against the power of God. The carnal mind is enmity against God and is not reconciled to God–neither, indeed, can it be. You cannot extract out of any amount of darkness a single beam of light. And you cannot extract out of any amount of flesh–purify it, educate it, direct it, guide it as you may–you cannot extract anything like spiritual light! That must come from above. "You must be born again."

Do not think Christians are made by education–they are made by creation. You may wash a corpse as long as ever you please, but you cannot wash life into it. You may deck it in flowers and robe it in scarlet and fine linen, but you cannot make it live–the vital spark must come from above. Regeneration is not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but by the power and energy of the Spirit of God and the Spirit of God alone.

As this light was unassisted by darkness, so was it also unsolicited. There came no voice out of that thick darkness, “Oh God, enlighten us!” There was no cry of prayer, no note of desire that God would send light–the desire and the thought began with Deity, not with the darkness. He said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. The first work of Divine Grace in the heart does not begin with man’s desire, but with God’s implanting the desire. Dear Hearer, if you desire to be saved by Grace, God gave you that desire, for you could never get so far as that apart from Him! Your darkness can be darkness and that is all it can be! It cannot long for, or aspire after light. In fact, if your soul longs after light it has some light already–a sincere desire is a part of that Divine light and life and must have come from above!

See, then, the ruin of nature and the freeness of Grace! Void and dark, a chaos given up to be covered with blackness and darkness forever and, while as yet it is not seeking God, the light arises, and the promise is fulfilled, “I am found of them that sought Me not: I said, behold Me! Behold Me, to a people that were not a people.” While we were lying in our blood, filthily polluted, defiled, He passed by and He said in the sovereignty of His love, “Live,” and we live! The whole must be traced to Sovereign Grace–from this sacred well of discriminating, distinguishing Grace we must draw water this morning and we must pour it out, saying, “Oh Lord, I

will praise Your name, for the first origin of my light was Your sovereign purpose and nothing in me."

Before we leave this point I must have you notice that this light came instantaneously. The Hebrew suggests this far better than our translation–it is sublimely brief. "Light be–light was." Here let us observe that the work of giving spiritual light is instantaneous. No matter through what process you may go which you may conclude afterward to have been preparatory to the light, and there is such a process, the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters before the light came, yet the absolute flash which brings salvation is instantaneous. A man is saved in a moment! From death to life is not the work of years, it is done at once. Saul of Tarsus rides to Damascus foaming at the mouth with threats against God's saints–Jesus Christ appears to him and Saul of Tarsus becomes Paul the humble follower of Jesus–in a moment!

And all conversions, though they may seem to you gradual, must be like this, for Paul says, "To me, first, God showed forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them that believe," as if Paul's salvation was the pattern upon which all others are cut. There must be a time in which you were dead and then another instant in which you were alive. So with darkness–there must be a period in which you have no light, and another period in which you have some light and that transition must be an instantaneous one. O that the Lord would

work a great work this morning–it is in His power, if He wills it, to turn every one of your hearts to Himself!

Let Him but speak the word and say, "Light be!" and no matter how dark the sinner's mind, if the Divine fiat shall go forth, "Light be," that depraved, foolish, drunken sinner will, in a moment, feel his heart begin to melt! As it is instantaneous, so it is irresistible. Darkness must give place when God speaks! Some ascribe Omnipotence to the will of man and lift man up to a sort of rivalry with God! Beloved, man has power to resist the ordinary motions of the Spirit, but when the Holy Spirit comes to effectual work and puts forth His mighty power, who shall stay His hand, or say unto Him, "What are you doing?"

"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," is the Divine claim of old, and it is true of our God to this day. Oh, how glorious is God when we think of Him thus! I could not worship a little God–but when I think of my great God as looking down upon the blackness and darkness of human nature and saying, "Let there be light," and light comes at once–then I magnify God for His Grace and bless His name!

II. The second point is DIVINE OBSERVATION. We read in the fourth verse, "And God saw the light." Does He not see everything? Yes, Beloved, He does, but this does not refer to the general perception of God of all His works, but is something

special. “God saw the light”–He looked at it with complacency, gazed upon it with pleasure.

I received, this morning, great satisfaction in turning over those few words in my own mind, “God saw the light.” I thought to myself–“Ah, the Lord looks with special observation upon His own work of Grace in His people.” If the Lord has given you light, dear Friend, no matter though you may only just now have received it, God looks on that light with an eye with which He does not view other things. He sees all other things in His Omniscience, but He sees this light in you as His offspring, as dear to Himself, as His own handiwork–He looks upon it with complacency–He sees it with tender observation.

A father looks upon a crowd of boys in a school and sees them all, but there is one boy whom he sees very differently from all the rest! He watches him with care–it is his own child and his eyes are especially there. Brethren, though you have come here sighing and groaning because of inbred sin, the Lord sees what is good in you, for He has put it there! Satan can see the light and he tries to quench it–God sees it and preserves it. The world can see that light and hates it and would, if possible, extinguish it. But God sees it and He restrains the world that it cannot utterly take from you the vital spark. Sometimes you cannot see the light, and I do not suppose it is in the nature of light to perceive itself–but God saw the light and that is better.

It is better that God should see Grace in me than that I should see Grace in myself. It is very comfortable for me to know that I am one of God's people–I cannot have much joy and peace in believing unless I have the gracious assurance of this fact. But still, that fact is not the foundation of my hope, for, whether I know it or not, if the Lord knows it, I am still safe. THIS is the foundation: "The Lord knows them that are His."

You and I are apt to say of someone, "What a Christian he is." Very likely his religion is all external show and the Lord has no regard unto his offering any more than He had unto the offering of Cain. We look at that Pharisee, standing in the Temple, with his phylacteries and hear him saying, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men are," and we envy him and think what a noble saint he is, but the Lord knows him and sees no light in him! But that poor humble publican who stands in the corner and dares not lift so much as his eyes unto Heaven cannot see any light in himself, but God sees the light in him and that man goes down to his house justified rather than the other.

You may be, today, going down, down into the vaults of despondency and even despair–ah, but if your soul has any longing towards Christ, and if you are still seeking to rest in Him, God sees the light and He will take care to discern between you and the darkness and to preserve you even to the day of His Son's appearing! Beloved, it is most pleasant to the Believer to know that

God's eyes are never taken off from that work of Grace which He has begun. Here is a promise! "I, the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment lest any hurt it: I will keep it night and day." Now this is–I must say again–this is a precious thought to those of you who have watched and guarded yourselves and felt your own powerlessness to do so and who are ready to give it up because you have thought, "Well, I cannot watch always and I fear I shall become a prey to temptation."

The Lord watches you and HE sees the light. He has His eyes always fixed upon the work of Grace that is in your soul. It is observable that in the New Testament we find the Apostles mentioning the virtues of the saints, but very seldom that they say anything about their faults. Take, for instance, Abraham. His faith is extolled, but nothing is said about his equivocation. In the case of Rahab, her faith is magnified, but nothing is said about her lying. Why is that? Is it not because God saw the light and when He was writing this Book of the new creation, He said nothing of the darkness? He saw His own work and would not regard the devil's work and the work of fallen human nature, too–He had respect only to the light.

III. We pass on to the third point and that is, DIVINE APPROBATION. "God saw the light, that it was good." Light is good in all respects. The natural light is good. Solomon says, "It is a pleasant thing to behold the sun." But you did not need Solomon

to inform you upon that point. Any blind man who will tell you the tale of his sorrows will be quite philosopher enough to convince you that light is good. Gospel light is good. “Blessed are the eyes which see the things which you see.”

You only need to travel into heathen lands and witness the superstition and cruelty of the dark places of the earth to understand that Gospel light is good. As for spiritual light, those that have received it long for more of it that they may see yet more and more the Glory of Heaven’s essential light! O God, You are of good the unmeasured Sea! You are of light both soul and source and center. Whether, then, we take natural light, Gospel light, spiritual light, or essential light, we may say of it, as God did, that it was good.

But we are speaking now of spiritual light. Why is that good? Well, it must be so, from its Source. The light emanates from God, in whom is no darkness at all, and, as it comes absolutely and directly from Him, it must be good. As every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, so everything which comes from above is good and perfect. The Lord distributes no alloyed metal–He never gives His people that which is mixed and debased. Your Words, O God, are pure as silver tried in the furnace of earth, purified seven times! The light of the new nature is good when we consider its origin. It is good, again, when we consider its likeness.

Light is liken to God. It is a thing so spiritual, so utterly to be ungrasped by the hand of flesh, that it has often been selected as the very type of God. Certainly the new nature in man is liken to God. It is, in fact, the Nature of God implanted in us! The Holy Spirit dwells in us and is the radix–the root of the new nature by which we become akin with the Most High. The Spirit of adoption by which we cry, "Abba, Father," is the Holy Spirit Himself working in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure.

Ignatius used to call himself, Theophorus, or the God-Bearer. The title might seem eccentric, but the fact is true of all the saints–they bear God about with them. God dwells in His saints as in a temple. It is good, also in its effect. It is good for a man to know his danger–it makes him retreat from it. It is good for him to know the evil of his sin–it makes him avoid it and repent of it. It is good for him to know a Savior's love–it leads him to trust the Savior and brings him to pardon, to justification, and to eternal life. It is good to have the light which reveals the God of Love, for without Him we are aliens, orphans, houseless wanderers. It is good to have the light to see the world to come, that we may escape its agonies, that we may seek after its glories. It is good to have light in all respects, for otherwise, like blind men, we should wretchedly and miserably wander in a labyrinth and miss our way to glory and to God.

Light is good in its effects. It is good, moreover, because it glorifies God. Where would God's Glory be in the outward

universe without light? Could we gaze upon the landscape? Could we stand upon the hilltop and drink in the view and then praise the glorious Maker who had made these marvelous works if there were no light? I question whether those first-born sons of light, the angels, would have a song to sing before the Eternal Throne, if light were taken away. Certainly, Beloved, spiritual light brings glory to God! It prostrates us in the dust, but it lifts HIM up. Spiritual light shows us our emptiness, our poverty, our wretchedness–but it reveals in blessed contrast His fullness, His riches, His freeness of Grace.

The more light in the soul, the more gratitude to God. The more we know of Christ and the Covenant of Grace and of God Himself, the louder and sweeter is that song which our glad hearts send up to the Eternal Throne. Let me say of the work of God in the soul as compared to light, that it is good in the widest possible sense. The new nature which God puts in us never sins–it cannot sin, because it is born of God. "What?" you say, "Does a Christian never sin?" Not with the new nature. The new nature never sins–the old nature sins. It is the darkness which is dark–the light is not darkness. The light is always light. It is not possible that the Christ who dwells in us could sin.

I again repeat the words, "He cannot sin, because he is born of God." He keeps himself so that the Evil One touches him not. What sin there is in the Believer comes from the remnants of corruption.

The spirit which is implanted never can sin, never can have communion with sin, any more than light can have communion with darkness. It is good–so good that it is the very same life which shall enter Heaven. You must not suppose that a Believer will have a new life granted to him when he gets to Heaven. Beloved, he will never die! The flesh dies, but the new Nature which God gives to us is as immortal as God Himself–it can neither be quenched here by temptation, nor there by the act of death. The love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord is everlasting, ever living. And though corruption and worms destroy this body, yet the new born spirit, like the light, will never see corruption.

Jesus Christ has Himself said, "He that lives and believes in Me shall never die." The new Nature shall never die. Its light shall develop itself from dawning twilight into the splendor of noonday and shall abide everlastingly in fullness of glory, according to the promise, "Your sun shall no more go down, neither shall your moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended."

IV. Now I must, by your patience, take you to the next point, which is, DIVINE SEPARATION. It appears that though God made light there was still darkness in the world. Read the fourth verse, "And God divided the light from the darkness." Beloved, the moment you become a Christian, you will begin to fight. You will be easy and comfortable enough, as long as you are a sinner, but as

soon as you become a Christian, you will have no more rest. John Bunyan was no great poet, but sometimes he struck out great truths in his rhymes. He has this one–

"A Christian man is seldom long at ease
When one trouble's gone, another does him seize."

This is very true, because a Believer is a double man. There are two principles in him. At first there was but one principle, which was darkness. Now light has entered and the two principles disagree. So observe this separation. One part of the Divine work in the soul of man is to make a separation in the man himself. I will put this plainly and it shall be a test between a child of God and the child of darkness this morning. Do you feel an inward contention and war going on? Can you read these verses and understand them– they are very strange verses–they are taken out of the same Psalm and follow each other. "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before You. Nevertheless, I am continually with You. You hold me by my right hand."

There are hundreds of people who, if you were to preach from that text would say, "Why the man contradicts himself. He makes himself out to be a beast and yet he says he dwells near to God!" Ah, none but the Believer knows that secret. You remember the Apostle Paul's own words in the seventh chapter of Romans. Many stupid people who are ignorant of the inner life make it out that Paul could not have been a Christian at all when he wrote those

words, but he was an advanced Believer–and only advanced Believers can sympathize with him. “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not. But what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me. But how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the Law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”

Permit me to put these two verses together–“O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” How can these two things be consistent? Ask the spiritual man–he will tell you!

“The Lord divides between light and darkness.” Darkness, by itself, will go on comfortably enough–but when the Lord sends in light, there will be a conflict–a terrible conflict, too! And you will find your own self divided into camps–you will find both Cain and Abel in your heart, Egyptians and Israelites in your soul–and if there is a David in your heart, there will be a Saul, too.

Whereas there is a division inside the Christian, there is certain to be a division outside. So soon as ever the Lord gives to any Believer light, he begins to separate himself from the darkness. The world’s religion used to satisfy him. If there was a pretty building and a good looking minister who could put his words together well and garnish the altar finely, the child of darkness did not care what he heard–whether the Gospel was preached or not. But as soon as ever he receives light, he cries, “All this is nothing to me, millinery, or anything else! I want light and the Truth of God and I cannot go to hear anything but the Gospel.”

He separates himself from the world’s religion, finds out where Christ is preached and goes there. Then as to society, the dead, carnal religionist can get on very well in ordinary society, but it is not so when he has light. I cannot go to light company, wasting the evening, showing off my fine clothes and talking frivolity and nonsense. Where are the children of light? Very likely down in some Ragged School where poor men and women seek to bless the little ones. That is the place for the child of light. It does not matter

what particular class of society the saints belong to, we shall seek their society. We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren! The light gathers to itself and the darkness to itself.

My dear Brethren, what God has divided, let us never unite. God has set an everlasting distance between the sheep and the goats–let us do the same. Christ went outside the camp, bearing His reproach–let us, therefore, come out from among them and be separate. Christ was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners–let us be nonconformists to the world. Let us dissent from all sin and be distinguished from the world, even as Jesus Christ was not of the world. This is a work of Grace, then, to make a wondrous separation.

Next notice DIVINE NOMINATION. Things must have names. Adam named the beasts, but God Himself named the day and the night. Search the fifth verse, "And God called the light Day and the darkness called He Night." It is a very blessed work of Grace to teach us to call things by their right names. Why did He call the light, Day, and the darkness, Night, except for this reason–He seems to say, "Let these things be distinguished, let light wear its name of Day and darkness its title of Night." From which I gather that the good which God works in His people must be good always and can never be described as bad.

The spiritual aspirations of God's people never can be evil. Carnal reason calls them folly, but the Lord would have us call them good. Here is a man who is panting after Graces which will cost him great sacrifices! He is panting after a spirituality which will separate him from men! It cannot be evil for him to seek the highest possible degree of Divine Grace. On the other hand, that which is darkness cannot be light and must not be called anything but Night. We have heard of some who have taken the sins of God's people and said, "These are not sins in these people." This is a grievous error, for darkness is darkness and must be called Night wherever it may be. If I find sin in my father or mother, dearly as I love them and desire to have them perfect, yet I must not make excuse for it and seek to call darkness Day. I must not in myself, when I discern imperfection, find a soft name for it by which I may take away its wickedness. I must call it what it is.

I remember hearing of a good man–I believe he was such–who fell into drunkenness on one occasion. He was excommunicated from Church fellowship and properly so. But afterwards he became very penitent and he went about the streets like a man who really should die of grief and ashamed because of his sin. He could not find peace. A dear Brother, who knew something of him, took him aside one day and said, "Dear Brother, have you made a full confession of your sin before God?" He thought he had. "Now,"

said the other, “it is a hard thing for me to ask, but I should like to hear you confess this sin.” So he did.

When he came to the act of confessing his sin to God, he said, “Lord, You know I have indulged my appetites,” and so on. He was not a bit better. “Now,” said his friend, “ My dear Brother, you had better unveil your whole sin and hide nothing. Then he prayed thus–"Lord, You know I got drunk.” It was all right as soon as he brought the thing out and called the darkness Night and went no longer round about. The Lord will not hear His people if they call the darkness Day. He will not attend to them. He will have them call darkness Night. So, let us go where we may, whether in ourselves or in other people, we must learn to call a spade a spade, to call things by their right names!

There is a great deal, remember, in the names which we give to things, because they are generally the index of our own estimation of what those things are. It is a work of Grace to teach us always to call the light Day and the darkness Night. “But,” says one, “can’t the right sometimes be wrong?” Never, never! I am asked by a man this question: “There is such and such a church. I am a minister there and there are some things I don’t agree with and yet I swear I do. I swear that, ex animo, I agree, although I do not. If I did not swear, I should lose my sphere of usefulness. If I don’t swear it, I shall never have an opportunity of doing good.”

My dear Friend, you have nothing to do with that! Whether you are doing good or mischief, your business is to call darkness Night, and light Day. Never do a bad thing, though you might hope to achieve a world of good by it. Right is never wrong and wrong is never right. It cannot be right for a man to do evil that good may come. Of those that hold such maxims it is written, "Their damnation is just." Let the light be called Day and the darkness Night.

Observe again–this is somewhat remarkable–that we read in the next sentence, "And the evening and the morning were the first day." Who called it so? I do not find that God did, yet it is in the Book of God and therefore I cannot take exception to it. How is it? The evening! Why the evening was darkness and the morning was light. The two together are called by the same name that is given to the light alone! What then? Why Beloved, in every Believer there is darkness and there is light, and yet he is not to be named a sinner because there is sin in him, but he is to be named from the major part of him–he is to be named from the grander quality! He is to be named a saint because there is saintness in him notwithstanding all the sin.

Now this will be a comforting thought to those of you who are mourning your infirmities. While I was talking about light, you said, "Yes, thank God I have some. I know the difference between it and darkness, yet for all that, darkness is my daily pest and

trouble. Can I be a child of God while there is any darkness in me?" Dear Brothers and Sisters, you, like the day, take not your name from the evening, but from the morning! From the day you shall be called altogether, as if you were now perfectly what you will be soon. You shall be called the Child of the Light, though there is darkness in you still! You are named after what is the predominating quality in the sight of God which will one day be the only principle remaining.

Observe that the evening is put first. We naturally have darkness first and it is often first in our mournful apprehension, as we have to come to God with, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." The place of the morning is second, for it only dawns because of Divine Grace. But, O Beloved, it is a blessed aphorism of John Bunyan that that which is last, lasts forever. That which is first has to give up its turn to the last–but nothing comes after the last. So that, though I am darkness, when once I am light in the Lord, there is no evening to follow–your sun shall no more go down. The first day in this life is an evening and a morning–but the second day, when we shall be with God forever–shall be a day with no evening, but one, sacred, high, eternal noon!

I have thus opened up a few experimental secrets. Some of you can say, "I understand it, for I feel it all in my life! I trust I am a new creature." Dear Friends, let me congratulate you! Let me say to you, "Walk in the light. Live as children of the light. Be ever

with your faces towards the sun–seek Christ–long to be made like He and never be content till, like the angel whom Milton speaks of, who dwells in the sun, you come to dwell in God, and lose yourself most blessedly by being swallowed up and filled with all the fullness of His Glory.

As for others here present, and I fear there are some such who have said, "This is all strange to me." Dear Friend, I pray God it may not be long strange to you, for if you are a stranger to a new creation, you are a stranger to the only hope of happiness. "You must be born again," is the old sentence which Divine Revelation has spoken–"you must." It is not, "You may be"–it is, "You must." It is not, "Some of you may do without it–you are so good you do not need it."

NO, "You must, you MUST be born again." He that sits on the Throne says, "Behold I make all things new." Has He made you new? The gates of Heaven are shut against the old creation–the floods destroyed it at the first–the floods of fire shall destroy it again. If you are not newly created you shall not outlive the general blaze. The first creation must be swept away. And you, if you are not newly created, must be swallowed up in everlasting misery! But if God has made you a new creature, that new creation is not to be touched by fire, nor flood, nor death, nor grave! You, as a part of that new creation, shall sing in the New Jerusalem which shall come down from Heaven as a bride adorned for her husband! You

shall tread her golden streets, delight in her jasper radiance, and sing with the mighty hosts in that day when they shall sing a new song unto the Lord who has created all things new!

The Lord grant we may be all present in the New Jerusalem which is from above, which is the mother of all the saints and unto God be praise, world without end. Amen. PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON–John 1, 3:18. And 1 Thessalonians 5.

Ge 1:2 • The Spirit's Work in the New Creation

SERMON 3134

T*he Spirit's Work In The New Creation*

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

Genesis 1:2

WE cannot tell how the Spirit of God brooded over that vast watery mass. It is a mystery, but it is also a fact. And it is here revealed as having happened at the very commencement of the Creation, even before God had said, "Let there be light." The first Divine act in fitting up this planet for the habitation of man was for the Spirit of God to move upon the face of the waters. Till that time all was formless, empty, out of order and in confusion. In a word, it

was chaos. And to make it into that thing of beauty which the world is at the present moment, even though it is a fallen world, it was necessary that the movement of the Spirit of God should take place upon it. How the Spirit works upon matter, we do not know, but we do know that God, who is a Spirit, created matter, fashioned matter and sustained matter–and that He will yet deliver matter from the stain of sin which is upon it. We shall see new heavens and a new earth in which materialism itself shall be lifted up from its present state of ruin and shall glorify God! But without the Spirit of God, the materialism of this world would have remained forever in chaos. Only as the Spirit came, did the work of Creation begin.

That fact I intend to use this evening, spiritualizing it. It is a literal fact and we are not to regard this Chapter of Genesis or any other part of Genesis as being a mere parable. But having said so, we think we may now say that these real facts may illustrate the work of God in the new creation and our main thought, just now, is that the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man is comparable to His work in Creation. As in various books by the same author you can trace the writer's idioms and as in many paintings by one great artist there are certain touches which betray the same hand, so in the great book of Nature we see traces of the same hand as in the book of Grace! And in this great picture of material beauty we may see the handiwork of that same Master Artist who has drawn lines and curves of spiritual beauty upon the souls of the redeemed!

I am going, first, to try to draw A PARALLEL BETWEEN THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN THE OLD AND NEW CREATION.

And first I want to remind you that as the movement of the Holy Spirit upon the waters was the first act in the six days work, so the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul is the first work of Grace in that soul. There may have been athousand sermons heard, but there has been no effectual work within the soul until the Spirit of God comes there! Sabbaths may have passed over the man's head for 50 years and during every one of those Sabbaths that man may have been a regular attendant at the House of God–but there has been nothing savingly done for him unless the Spirit of God has entered into him and begun to work upon his soul. He may have been baptized and joined the Church and partaken of the Lord's Supper– but, for all that, his heart is still without any sort of form or fashion which God would have it to bear. It is void–there is no life of God within it, no faith in Christ, no true hope for the future. It is emptiness, itself, notwithstanding all that has been done, if the Spirit of God has not been at work in it!

It is a very humbling Truth of God, but a Truth, notwithstanding its humiliating form, that the best man that mere morality ever produced is still "without form and void" if the Spirit of God has not come upon him. All the efforts of chaos in another shape! Some of the mountains may have been leveled, but valleys have been elevated into other mountains. Some vices have been discarded, but

only to be replaced by other vices that are, perhaps, even worse. Or certain transgressions have been forsaken for a while, only to be followed by a return to the same sins, so that it has happened unto them, as Peter writes, “according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” Unless the Spirit of God has been at work within him, the man is still, in the sight of God, “without form and void” as to everything which God can look upon with pleasure. What? Is it so when a man has made great efforts and has really done his best? Yes, for, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Even when the flesh does its best, its fairest offspring is still only flesh! Water will naturally rise as high as its own source, but without extraneous pressure, it will never rise any higher. And humanity may rise as high as humanity can rise, but it can never get any higher until the Spirit of God imparts a supernatural force to it. “Except a man be born-again (born from above), he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” The very first act in the great work of the new creation is that the Spirit of God moves upon the soul as He moved upon the face of the waters.

The second thing I ask you to note is that to this work nothing whatever is contributed by the man himself. “Theearth was without form and void,” so it could not do anything to help the Spirit. “Darkness was upon the face of the deep.” The Spirit found no light there–it had to be created. There was nothing whatever there

to help the Spirit of God–no agencies at work to say to Him, “We have been preparing the way for Your coming. We needed Your assistance. We were waiting for You and we rejoice that You have come to finish the work that we have begun.” There was nothing of the kind! And sad as the Truth is, in unregenerate man there is nothing whatever that can help the Spirit of God. The heart of man promises help, but, “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” The will has great influence over the man, but the will is depraved, so it tries to play the tyrant over all the other powers of the man–and it refuses to become the servant of the eternal Spirit of Truth! If I am never to preach the Gospel to a sinner till I see something in him that will help the Holy Spirit to save him, I shall never be able to preach the Gospel at all! And if Jesus Christ never saves a man till He sees something in that man that cries to Christ to save Him, then no man will ever be saved! We are, by nature, not merely like the man who was wounded on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho and who was left on the road half dead, but we are wholly “dead in trespasses and sins.” And in the dead sinner there is nothing that can help his own resurrection! There is not a hand there to be lifted, nor even an ear to hear, nor an eye to see, nor a pulse that can beat. We do not exaggerate nor go beyond the Truth of God when we say this. And every man is thus dead till the Spirit of God comes to him! And when the Spirit comes to him, He finds nothing in the man that can co-operate with

Him, and everything that is to be good must be created into him. What isneeded is not the flaming of sparks that have almost expired–not the strengthening of a life that was almost dead through faintness–the Spirit has to deal with death, rottenness and corruption! Man's nature is a morgue and a sepulcher–and a little Hell–and God's Spirit must bring to it that which is living, good and pleasing in God's sight if it is ever to be there!

But more than that, in the old creation, not only was there nothing whatever that could help the Holy Spirit, but there seemed nothing at all suitable to the Spirit. I mean, for instance, that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Order, but there was disorder. He is the Spirit of Light, but there was darkness. Does it not seem a strange thing that the Spirit of God should have come there at all? Adored in His excellent Glory in the Heaven where all is order and all is light, why should He come to brood over that watery deep and to bring the great work of bringing order out of chaos? And, in a similar fashion, often and often have we asked–Why should the Spirit of God ever have come into our hearts? What was there in us to induce the Spirit of God to begin a work of Grace in us? We admire the condescension of Jesus in leaving Heaven to dwell upon earth, but do we not equally admire the condescension of the Holy Spirit in coming to dwell in such poor hearts as ours? Jesus dwelt with . If it were possible for thecondescension of the Incarnation to be outdone, it would be in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the

hearts of men! This is a miracle of mercy, indeed, for I say again, there is nothing in the heart by nature that can at all please the Holy Spirit, but there is everything there that can grieve Him! The Spirit would beget in us repentance for sin, but the heart is hard as a rock. The Spirit would work in us faith, but the heart is full of unbelief. The Spirit would make us pure, but the heart is fond of sin. The Spirit would lead us towards God, but all our passions incline us to run away from Him and to run to everything that is contrary to Him. Yet does the Spirit of God come and work in us while our heart is nothing but chaos and our nature is full of darkness! For this wonderful mercy, let us bless and love the Spirit of God!

Notice, also, that the Spirit of God is as mysterious in His coming into human hearts as He was in His working in theold Creation. I said before that we cannot explain how the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters. Some try to fetch a meaning out of the Hebrew word, but I believe it helps them very little. It is one of the deep mysteries of Scripture. Ever must the contact of the Spirit with materialism remain a marvel–and can we ever tell how the Spirit of God comes and deals with sinful men? We know that our Savior, Himself, said to Nicodemus, “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it came and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.”

But mysterious as it is, it is real–as those who have experienced it know–and as those may see who will watch the effects which the

Spirit produces upon the hearts of men. I would like to ask all in this present assembly whether they know anything about the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit in their souls. Beloved Hearers, there may be many things of which you may be ignorant and yet you may be none the worse for that ignorance. But if you are ignorant of the working of the Holy Spirit in your spirit, then you are ignorant of eternal life–ignorant of the one thing necessary to deliver you from Hell and lift you up to Heaven! Have you ever experienced within your spirit a Divine Power that turned you from your old habits and old ways–and that made such a radical change in you that you are no longer what you once were–a change that was practically to you a new birth, a new creation? I pray you not to deceive yourselves about this matter! Sinners had to be born-again in the Apostles' time and they must be born-again now if they are ever to see or to enter the Kingdom of God! It was necessary that they should be regenerated in the days of Christ, but it is equally necessary now. And it is not merely necessary for people who have been to prison or who have been thieves and drunks–it is equally necessary for you, the children of godly parents, for you respectable people, for you who have never done a dishonorable action in all your lives! You are not yet partakers of the Divine Nature unless the Spirit of God, in the deep mystery of His almighty power, has worked that new life in your soul! Solemnly have I asked myself this question, “Have I been born-again?” And I

urge each one of you earnestly to examine yourselves upon this all-important matter. Do you know that this new life has been put within you? Let none of us be satisfied unless we know that it is so! What an awful thing it would be to be in doubt whether I am a child of God or not–whether I am on the road to Heaven or not! May God grant that none of us may be in such doubt, even for an hour–but may we have absolute certainty upon this point, mysterious though it is!

We have so far noted that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters as the first act of the six-days' work and that by this movement nothing on the earth contributed or was congruous, that this movement was a mystery and yet very real. Note, next, that this movement was most effectual. "The earth was without form, and void," but that didnot defeat the purpose of the Spirit of God. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep," but He could work in the dark. The darkness did not hinder Him and, blessed be God, the deep depravity of our nature does not prevent the Holy Spirit from creating it anew in Christ Jesus! Without God, the turning of a heart of stone into flesh would surely be impossible! And if there had ever been an impossibility of impossibilities, I feel that the changing of my nature would have been that impossibility–and each Christian here may feel the same with regard to himself or herself. But nothing is too hard for the Lord! Though a man may have had no knowledge of the Gospel up to the time when the

Spirit of God came upon him, or though he may have been as violently opposed to that Gospel as he possibly could be, yet let the Spirit of God savingly deal with that man and all hindrances disappear, all opposition gives way and the work of Grace is effectually accomplished! Light came when God said, "Let there be light." The waters were separated, the dry land appeared and the winged fowl, the fish that swim in the deep, the cattle that crowd the fields and man, himself, in the image of God–all these came at the Lord's command! Chaos had become a garden and death blossomed into life!

It only needed the Spirit of God to come and then the work was effectually done. And this is a point I want to mention as good cheer to some who are here. You may be dead in sin, but the Spirit of God can quicken you! Dear Brother, you may be preaching to those who are dead in sin, but preach the Gospel to them all the same! It is your business to preach the Gospel to dead sinners, for it is the Gospel that makes the dead to live! If we had to look for some natural goodness in the sinner before we preached the Gospel to him, we would never preach to him at all! But we have to go to him where he is, with darkness over his soul and ruin and confusion all around–and while we preach the Word, the Spirit of God accompanies it with saving power and the man is made to live–and he is fashioned in the image of God! Blessed be God, the Spirit's work is always effectual! It is possible to grieve and to

resist the Holy Spirit, but when He puts forth His almighty power, then He is irresistible! The will is sweetly inclined and the man cries, "Great God, I yield, constrained by mighty love. I throw down my weapons of rebellion and I willingly go as Your gracious Spirit leads me."

I want you to also notice that

where the Spirit came, the work was carried on to completion.

The work of Creation did not end with the first day, but went on till it was finished on the sixth day. God did not say, "I have made the light and now I will leave the earth as it is." And when He had begun to divide the waters and to separate the land from the sea, He did not say, "Now I will have no more to do with the work." He did not take the newly-fashioned earth in His hands and fling it back into chaos, but He went on with His work until, on the seventh day, when it was completed, He rested from all His work and, glory be to God, He will not leave unfinished the work which He has commenced in our souls! Where the Spirit of God has begun to move, He continues to move until the work is done. And He will not fail or turn aside until all is accomplished. How we ought to bless His name for this! If the Spirit of God ever did utterly leave His work in any man's soul undone, then each one here might feel, "He may leave it unfinished in me"–and there would remain no solid comfort for any one of us! If a child of God could ever fall from Grace, then you and I might be among the first to fall, but

Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” Rightly do we sing–

“The work which wisdom undertakes
Eternal mercy never forsakes!”

As surely as there is a first day, there will come a seventh day in which God will rest because His work will be completed. And as surely as the Spirit of God has moved upon our soul and there has come to us light instead of darkness, so shall there be a day of rest in which we shall keep the Sabbath of God with Him forever, because the Spirit’s work has been completed in us even as the work of Christ has been finished on our behalf.

II. Now, having thus tried to draw a parallel between the Spirit’s work in the old and the new Creation, let me go on to the practical part of this evening’s meditation and try to show you, in the second place, that THE PARALLEL WE HAVE DRAWN FURNISHES MANY ENCOURAGEMENTS.

And first, it furnishes encouragement to those distressed sinners who fear that they are utterly beyond the possibilityof salvation. “I,” says one, “am conscious that there is no good in me of any sort whatever. And I am so wicked that grim despair has settled down upon my heart.” Listen to the text, my Brother–“The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the

deep.” Is not that an exact description of your heart? “Oh, yes,” you say, “that is a terribly true picture of myself!” Well, what comes next? “And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” While there was confusion, while there was darkness–before there was any sort of preparation for the coming of the Spirit, any kindling of flambeaux with which to break the darkness, or anything that would have seemed like the beginning of order, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters! Then why should He not move in your soul? Others who were in just as sad a condition as you are now in, have been saved–then why should you not also be saved? You have been a gross sinner, but other equally gross sinners have received the Spirit of God, who has brought Christ to them–so why should not you? If you have been the vilest of the vile, there is one text that still gives you good cheer. It is that one where Paul speaks of himself as the chief of sinners and yet declares that he was saved. You cannot be a greater sinner than the chief of sinners! The chief is first of all and you can only be second to the chief. Or if you are even equal to him, God has proved His power to save you by saving Saul of Tarsus! Think of what Saul’s case was like when he was on the road to Damascus. Why, if it were possible, it was more chaotic than chaos, itself, and darker than the primeval darkness! He was exceedingly angry against the people of God and was bent upon their destruction! Yet the Spirit of

God came upon him and within a few minutes he was crying out, “Lord, what will You have me to do?”

Let me further say to you, poor despairing Soul, suppose such an one as you are should be saved–would it not be a wonder of Grace? “Yes,” you say, “it would, indeed.” Well, God is the great Wonder-Worker! It is His delight to do things which are very wonderful, for these bring Him the most glory. Men can do commonplace things, but wonders are worked by God! If He were to save you, would you not forever feel indebted to His Grace? “Yes,” you say, “that I should, if He would take such a black and sinful one as I am and save me.” Very well. This is just what He wants in His children, that they should forever love Him and praise Him–and feel that they are under gracious obligations of love to Him. When God means to make a great saint, He often uses a great sinner as the raw material. It is the man who is greatly in debt who loves the friend who discharges his debt. If I were a physician and I wanted to establish my fame, do you think that I should trouble about you who have a finger ache or some other trifling complaint? No! If I wanted London to ring with the story of my cures, I would try to find out the man who is nearest to the gates of death, or one who is afflicted with many diseases at once, for if I healed him, all would be amazed and it would be reported everywhere,“This man has worked this great marvel.” Now, Christ is the Physician and you are the patient. And the worse you are, the more glory can He get

out of you! He is certainly able to save you, bad as you are, and so He will glorify His name as a Savior. “It shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” Thus I say unto you, O Soul, though you are empty of everything but sin, the Spirit of God can fill you with Grace! And though darkness enshrouds you, the Spirit of God can come upon you and make you light in the Lord! So you need not despair, but rather give your ear attentively to this promise of the Lord Jesus Christ–“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Or this, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” May the Spirit of God lead you to believe in Jesus!

There is an equal encouragement in this text for those who are the people of God, or who once thought that theywere, but who have fallen into a very sad and miserable condition. There are some who have walked in the Light of God and enjoyed sweet fellowship with Him, but they have been very careless, or they have neglected private prayer, or perhaps they have fallen into sin and now they have got into such a state of heart that they cannot see anything gracious in themselves. “Oh,” says such an one, “I am worse than the sinner who never knew Christ! I feel as if I had played the apostate, like Judas, or as if I had turned aside, like Demas, loving the present world, or as if I were a tree without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. I feel that in myself there is no order of

Grace and no light of love." Listen, dear Friend, to my text–"And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." I bless God that I have many a time known what it is, when I felt most barren, to be made to blossom and bring forth fruit–and when apparently most dead, suddenly to be quickened into ecstatic life! And when I have, in my own estimation, lain at Hell's door, yet by one promise applied with power, by one flash of the Divine energy, to be lifted up and made to say, even in that place wherein my soul slept, like Jacob did at Bethel, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven."

Has not the Spirit of God often dealt so with you experienced saints who know what the ups and downs of the Christian life are? Has He not made you strong when you have been weak and made you to sing just after you had been sighing–and made the waters to be calmest just after the fiercest storm and your brightest days to follow just after the hurricane? Then have you rejoiced in the clear shining after rain, when the winter was over and gone and when the voice of the singing of birds was heard in your land! I know you have found it so! Then do you now think that the Lord waitsto find some good thing in you before He will bless you? Did He not love you when you were in your blood, like an infant cast out into the field unwashed and unswaddled? Do you think that His arm is shortened, or that His love is diminished? You say that you have

been unfaithful to Him, but He abides faithful! Your faith may seem to be dead, but "your life is hid with Christ in God." You feel so foul, but–

"There is a fountain, filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains!"

Do not despair, dear Friend–look again to the Cross–begin again where you began before! Remember the simple story that I told you long ago of poor Jack the Huckster, [See Sermon #47, Volume 1–CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE–Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at .] who used to sing–

"I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All."

Get back to that point, dear Brother or Sister, and so you will get back to Light of God and once more you will realize that the Spirit of God is working within your spirit!

I think our text also gives encouragement to those who are working for God. You are not now thinking aboutyourself. You have, by Divine Grace, advanced beyond that stage, and you are thinking about others. You are going to take a district and visit it–and there are places there that swarm with the worst of characters. You do not know any good people there who are at all likely to welcome and assist you. Go there, my dear Brother! Venture there,

my dear Sister, without any fear, remembering that although "the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, the Spirit of God moved upon the waters." Go to that dark spot, for the Spirit of God will go with you! He will guide you through the darkness and through the chaos–and will help and bless you. Missionaries have gone to lands where the people were cannibals, but they have not been unsuccessful. The Gospel has been carried to people who were so degraded that they did not seem to have any sense of possessing even a soul–yet the Gospel had not been without fruit among them! No race of men has ever been discovered that has been sunk too low for the Spirit of God to work upon them and to save them! Let us never despair of any, or think that they are beyond the Spirit's power.

"But," says one, "I would like to speak to those who are willing to hear me and who are anxious to be saved." No doubt you would, for most people like easy work, but if the Lord sends you to those who do not wish to be saved, and who have no care at all about religion, you must not pick and choose your work–you must go where God sends you! Would you not like to go where God would get the most glory? Of course you would! Well, He gets the most glory when big sinners are saved, when those who hated Him most begin to love Him, when those who were most opposed to His Truth gladly receive it! Then there is the greatest triumph of His Grace and the greatest glory to His holy name. I have sometimes

thought that I would like to have lived in England in the days of the Puritans. It must have been a great privilege to have heard some of those old masters of theology preaching the Gospel and to have mingled with the holy multitudes that worshipped God in those days when this land was a very Paradise. But there is more need of the preacher of the Gospel now than ever there was and, therefore, he ought to be glad to be where he is most needed. A good servant would rather that his master put him where there is plenty for him to do than let him be where there are more workers than work! I see the thick clouds of Popery spreading over the land in every direction and see scarcely anything in the signs of the times that tends to cheer one's heart. I see plenty of comfort in the Scriptures! I have abundant joy in the Lord and rest in Him, but as for the way in which things are going in all the churches–ah, Lord God, how has Your Spirit been restrained and how little work does He appear to be doing in these evil times! But because the times are dark, shall we despair? No, but still remember that when "the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep"–then "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

Was it not so in Christ's own day and in the time of the Apostles? The world was sunk in sin, superstition and cruelty–but after Pentecost thousands were converted! Was it not so in Luther's day? The professing church, like another Samson, was lulled to sleep upon the lap of the Delilah of Rome! And the church's locks were

utterly shorn–its strength was gone and it was delivered over to the Philistines. But, in due time, the Spirit of God came into the darkness and the great Truth that we are justified by faith–not by the works of the Law–was like a repetition of the ancient command and its sequel, "Let there be light, and there was light." Blessed be God, the darkness of those days could not keep back the light of Luther's preaching! Nor Calvin's clear transparent preaching and Zwingli's burning words! And if all England should become black as night and things grow worse, and worse, and worse, and worse, until they come to the worst–and Satan lords it over all–there would be no cause for fear even then! Fearlessly should the soldiers of Christ still go on, for the Spirit of God will again move when chaos and darkness reign! Be of good cheer, Brothers and Sisters in Christ! Pray on, work on, trust on and God will indeed bless you!

I earnestly pray that those to whom I have spoken may receive whatever of the Truth of God I have uttered. And especially do I pray this for the seeking sinner. How I long that he may realize that the only power that can save him lies outside himself! If you are ever to be accepted before God, you will never be accepted through anything that you are in yourself. You will have to be accepted in Christ Jesus and, in order to be accepted in Christ Jesus, you must have faith in Jesus. If you are ever to be a living child of the living God, the Spirit of God must quicken you! There is in you nothing whatever that can recommend you to God. He and He, alone, must

save you if you are ever to be saved. “Why,” says one, “you drive me to despair by talking like that!” I wish I could drive you to such despair as would make you cease from your own works and leave off all ideas of self-salvation–and make you fall as one dead before the Throne of Mercy and cry, “Lord, save me, or I perish!” We cannot too plainly preach that salvation is of the Lord alone! Everything that is of Nature’s spinning will have to be unraveled and the soul must be clothed in the spotless robe of the righteousness of Christ. You may build on the sandy foundation of creature merit, but all you build will surely come down! Oh, that you may cease from such foolish building and that you may build upon what Jesus Christ has done! There you will build upon the Rock, the real foundation! If the Spirit of God will enable you to build there, you will have built for eternity! May Grace, mercy, and peace be with you in so doing, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

Ge 1:4 • The First Day of Creation

SERMON 1252

T*he First Day Of Creation*

"And God saw the light that it was good."

Genesis 1:4

WE shall, this morning, leave all discussion as to the creation of the world to those learned Divines who have paid their special attention to that subject, and to those geologists who know, or at any rate think they know, a very great deal about it. It is a very interesting subject, but this is not the time for its consideration. Our business is moral and spiritual rather than scientific. We justify our present discourse by quoting that remarkable parallel text which the Holy Spirit has given us in the second Epistle to the Corinthians, fourth chapter and the sixth verse, where Paul says, "God, who

commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The creation was an instructive type of the new creation. God's methods of forming the old creation illustrate His ways in preparing and perfecting His people who are new creatures in Christ Jesus. So we shall gather light from an analogy which is evidently warranted by the New Testament. We trust we shall not be guilty of inventing things fanciful, strained, or merely curious–our objective is edification and consolation–and not a display of ingenuity. May the eternal light of the Holy Spirit shine upon us, now, that by His light we may see light.

Man's fallen nature is a very chaos, "without form and void," with darkness thick and sevenfold covering all. The Lord begins His work upon man by the visitation of the Spirit, who enters the soul mysteriously and broods over it, even as of old He moved upon the face of the waters. He is the Quickener of the dead soul. In connection with the Presence of the Holy Spirit, the Lord sends into the soul, as His first blessing, light. The Lord appeals to man's understanding and enlightens it by the Gospel. The heavenly light reveals to man his obligations to God and his forgetfulness of them. It shows him the evil of sin, his own guilt, consequent danger and the impossibility of his escaping from that danger by any efforts of his own.

That same light, also, reveals to man God's way of salvation–shows him the Person of Christ, His work, its suitability and its freeness–and lets him see how he may obtain an interest in redemption by the simple act of believing. It is a blessed thing for any man when the Lord God says concerning him, "Let there be light." If you keep your eyes upon the chapter you will observe that the light came into the world at first by the word–"God said, 'let there be light.'" It is through the Word of God contained in this book, the Bible, that light comes into the soul. Let me correct myself–it is by Him who is called the Logos, THE WORD, that light is poured into the heart of man, for, "in Him was life, and the life was the light of men."

This is that true light which lights every man that comes into the world. The Spirit, you see, is engaged in the new creation–He broods over the soul. The Son of God is the Creator, also–He is that WORD without whom nothing was made, and by whom light came. And the Father unites in the same sacred work, for it is He who speaks and it is done. It needs the Trinity to new-create a soul. Oh, Triune God, our souls which are new-created worship You with the trinity of their nature–spirit, soul, and body! The light which broke in upon the primeval darkness was of a very mysterious kind, and came not according to ordinary laws, for as yet neither sun nor moon had been set as lights in the firmament.

Can we tell how spiritual light first dawns on nature's night? It darts upon some souls without the aid of apparent ministries, immediately from God! Indeed, though the Lord sends light by this means or by that, yet in every case the light is His own work, and the means are, in themselves, so evidently powerless that the whole glory of the work belongs to the Lord alone! How He removes darkness from the understanding and illuminates the intellect is a secret reserved for only Himself. Mysteriously, then, the light enters into the soul of man. But one thing is clear concerning it– however it comes, if it is true light, it is always God-given and comes, alone, from the great Father of lights.

No gracious light ever will or can come to any man except directly from God Himself. There was no latent light in the chaotic mass of world. There was no brilliance to be developed out of the primitive darkness. It was necessary that Jehovah should interpose and that His fiat should pour in light firm above. O heart of man, you are darkness itself, but in the Lord is your light found! The light came instantaneously. Six days were occupied in furnishing the earth, but a moment sufficed for illuminating it. God works rapidly in the operation of regeneration–as with a flash, He darts light and life into the soul.

The operations of Grace are gradual, but its entrance is instantaneous. Although instantaneous, it is not, however, shallow and short-lived. The light did not depart because of its rapid

coming–it was a permanent blessing which earth received in that glad hour. The light remained, increased and though in every spot upon the globe there are necessary interludes of night, and though there has been an evening as well as a morning to all succeeding days, yet our globe has never been forsaken of the blessed light since the day when first the eternal Word flashed it forth upon the face of the deep! Even so, when God sends Grace into the soul of man it comes in an instant, but it does not so depart. “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”

The darkness struggles for the mastery, but the light, once given, none shall quench–it must and shall shine forth more and more unto the perfect day. All this is worthy of our careful note, but the point which we are about to dwell upon is this–our text concerns only the first day of creation and the Lord’s consideration of that first day’s work–and His approval of it. The first day of creation fairly pictures the commencement of our spiritual life, our conviction, conversion and first faith in Jesus.

My objective shall be to speak words of comfort to beginners, that I may cheer those upon whom the true light has only lately begun to shine. And I shall, also, give a few words of advice to older people as to their duty to these newlyenlightened ones.

Our first observation will be this–THE LORD SEES WHATEVER HE CREATES. “The Lord saw the light.” He was the sole observer of it. Neither eyes of man, nor bird, nor beast was

there to behold the golden glory, but God saw the light! Newly enlightened one, it may be you are pained because you have no Christian companion to observe your change of heart. Cease from your sorrow, for God beholds you! Have you seen yourself a sinner and do you, therefore, weep in secret places? Have you begun to see the Savior and do you look to Him in loneliness of spirit and find in Him a joy with which a stranger intermeddled not?

It is but a small matter that no human eyes have seen your repentance and your faith, for He beholds them, even He who gave them birth! It may be that neither father nor mother has perceived the change and, perhaps, had they perceived it they may be such that they would not have rejoiced in it. But let this be your comfort–your heavenly Father sees you and His heart pities you. When the prodigal was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and even thus, your heavenly Father sees you! And as this was enough for the prodigal, so it is enough for you. Upon your tears of penitence He has fixed His eyes, and upon your glance of faith He has turned His gaze. "The Lord saw the light"–this grand Truth of God should be very sweet to those whose faith is lonely, who meet with many discouragements, and little or no sympathy.

Like Hagar in the desert you should rejoicingly say, "You, God, see me." "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry." David said, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me." Oh, young beginner, the Lord sees the work

of Grace that is in you! Though it is but in its first day, He does not turn His eyes from the light which He has kindled! And as long as this is the case, you need not fear. The orator of old thought Plato, alone, quite enough for an audience! Much more, then, may you consider that the Lord, alone, is all that you need by way of observation and you may joyfully pray with the Psalmist, "Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You use to do unto those that love Your name."

That light had come into the world in a noiseless manner, yet the Lord saw it. The entrance of God's Word which gives light is effected in "solemn silence of the mind." If men make an illumination, we can hear the crackling of their fireworks all over the city. But when God illuminates the earth with the sun, the orb of day arises without a sound! The ancients talked of the chariot of the sun, but whoever heard the sound of wheels or the hoof beats of horses in the sky? The health-bearing wings of the morning cause no tumult in the air when they are spread abroad. "When morn her rosy steps in the eastern clime advancing, sows the earth with orient pearl," her footsteps are not heard.

True, the birds salute her coming with glad songs, but she, herself, steals onward without voice. Even thus Grace enters the soul and not a whisper is breathed, yet the Lord sees the light. Light is its own advertisement, it needs no trumpet to announce it. And it is the same with Divine Grace. Dear young Friend, in you the work

of Grace has been a very quiet one. Perhaps you remember no remarkable sermon, no horrible dream, no sick-bed experience, no grim terrors of the Law as have happened to others of God's people. You have been treated as Lydia was whose heart the Lord opened, or like Timothy, you have known the Scriptures from your youth.

Be not, therefore, led to suspect your sincerity, or to doubt the reality of the work of Grace. Although the work in your soul has been so quiet, so hidden from the eyes of men, so unremarkable and commonplace, yet take comfort from our text, "The Lord saw the light." No trumpet proclaimed it, but the Lord saw it! No voice went forth concerning it, but the Lord saw it and it was enough! And in your case it is the same. The earth itself could not recognize the light, yet the Lord saw it. Poor dull chaos, what could it know? And as for primeval night, the light shone in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not.

How often does the young Believer stand in doubt as to himself! How frequently does he enquire, "Is this light or is it not?" Nor is he alone in such great searchings of heart, for there are times with some of the more advanced of us, when we are very glad to think that the Lord sees the light, for we cannot see it. There are times when, through doubt, fear and a keen sense of sin, we begin to question whether the Lord has ever shone upon us at all! And if this happens to fullgrown saints it is not much wonder if it occurs to

babes in Grace in the first morning of their life. If it should occasionally prove a very serious question–"Am I in the light or not?"–we need not marvel, for often have sincere children of God put up the anxious inquiry, "Is this light, or only darkness visible?"

How often do we mourn that we have scarcely more light than suffices to reveal our darkness and make us pine for more! Oh, troubled one, lay this home to your soul–the Lord saw the light when earth, herself, could not perceive it! Let us not forget that besides the light there was no other beauty. The earth, according to the Hebrew, was "tohu and bohu," which, in order to come near to both the sense and sound at the same time, I will render, "anyhow and nohow." It was confusion, emptiness, waste. Matter was discordant and disorganized. And so God fixed His eyes on the light, not on the chaos!

Even so, beloved Friend, your experience may seem to be a chaos, nohow and anyhow, exactly what it should not be, a maze of unformed conceptions and half-formed desires, and ill-formed prayers–but yet there is Grace in you and God sees it–even amid the dire confusion and huge uproar of your spirit! What He has, Himself, created in you He beholds, considers, and delights in! And, as for the sin that dwells in you, He only regards it as covered from His sight by the atoning work of His dear Son! Remember, too, that when the light came it had to contend with darkness, but God saw it, none the less.

So, also, in your soul, there still remains the darkness of inbred corruption, ignorance, infirmity and tendency to sin. And these cause a conflict, but the light is not hidden from the eyes of God. What a mercy this is that our God keeps His eyes on the light rather than on the darkness. Oh, how I bless Him for that! If He were to ignore the light that is in us because it is feeble, and look only at our sin because it is abundant, He would certainly utterly destroy us! But instead of that He casts our sins behind His back, while upon the new-born Grace He fixes His steady gaze and says, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

For many reasons the Lord sees the light, but chiefly He sees it because He made it, and He forsakes not the work of His own hands. God can see Grace in men where you and I cannot, because He knows where it is, seeing He, Himself, hid it in the soul. There is never a grain of Grace in the world but what God has a register of it. All the Grace in men's hearts calls God, "Father," and God hears its voice and turns His eye that way. He knows His own children and His eyes and His heart are towards them continually for good. He knows the light which is of His own creating–there is not one stray sunbeam in the universe, nor one forgotten ray of light.

Neither is there a spark of forgotten Grace, or a grain of salvation which has got out of its course. God cannot but remember His own

Grace, seeing that the giving of it is a work so dear to His heart, and the effect of that work is so precious in His esteem. To sum up what we have said, you who have been converted to God may lament that in your soul there is no order and that everything is tossed about. You may perceive no growth, no fruit, no virtue in your life because you have not known the Lord long enough to produce much.

But if there is light enough to reveal Christ in you as your only hope, be of good cheer, for the Lord does not look for the fourth day's work on the first day! He sees that in you which is of His own giving and creating–and he calls it good! Seeing the light in you, He will perpetuate it so that you shall never walk in darkness! And He will increase it till the glory breaks upon you! Do you repent of sin? God sees the light. Have you bemoaned your shortcomings? God saw the light. Have you begun to pray? "Behold, he prays," says God, for He sees the light. Have you believed in Jesus Christ with even a trembling faith? God sees the light. Have you begun to hope in His mercy? He sees that hope, for the God that gave you its light still looks upon it!

II. It is time for us to pass on to a second head, which is this–THE LORD APPROVES OF WHAT HE CREATES. "God saw the light that it was good." He took pleasure in it. Now, as far as this world was concerned, light was but young and new–and so in some of you, Grace is quite a novelty. You were only converted a very little

while ago and you have had no time to try yourselves or to develop your Divine Graces, yet the Lord delights in your new-born life! There are some older folk who are suspicious of the dawn of Grace and look very dubiously upon new converts, but in this they have not the mind of God.

The old members of our Churches in the country, 20 years ago, used to say, "We must not take in young converts too soon. We must summer and winter them before they are baptized." This they called prudence. I wonder what they would think of prudent farmers who summered and wintered the lambs before they took them into the fold? Or prudent parents who summered and wintered their babes before they pressed them to their bosom? We ought right gladly to take the little babes in Grace and nurse them for the Lord–and by no means despise their youth. The Lord did not leave the light to itself till it had been tried for years, but on the first day He smiled upon it and pronounced it good!

He took delight in it because it was as much His creation and as truly good as if He had made it ages before. Light is good at dawn as well as at noon. The Grace of God is good though but newly received! It will work out for you greater things, by-and-by, and make you more happy and more holy, but even now all the elements of excellence are in it and its first day has the Divine blessing upon it. Grace in the bud is pleasant unto the Lord–let this Truth of God fill the newly converted with intense delight!

Here we must mention again that it was struggling light, yet none the less, for it was approved of the Lord. We do not understand how it was that the light and the darkness were together until God divided them, as this verse intimates, but as John Bunyan says, “No doubt darkness and light, here, began their quarrel,” for what communion has light with darkness? The black darkness was in possession, but the arrows of light pierced it through and through. It strove to hold its own, but before long it could be said, “the darkness is past and the true light now shines.”

Do you remember how it was with you when the light invaded the little world within you? I remember well the inward battle and sore conflict in my own case. What struggles! What contentions! What conflicts my soul endured when the light first broke in upon nature’s night! My darkened heart rebelled against the light, hating to have its deeds reproved. But the light would not be extinguished or turned aside. Backed by the Divine fiat, it pierced its way until I joined the company to whom it is said, “you were sometime darkness, but now are you light in the Lord.”

My Brothers and Sisters, I am sure you are no strangers to this conflict, nor is it to you altogether a thing of the past. You are still in the conflict. Still Grace and sin are warring in you, and will do so till you are taken Home. Let this help you, O you who are perplexed! Remember that struggling as the light is, God approves of it and calls it good! Even the repentance which cannot repent as

it would is good! The faith which cannot believe as it would is good! Life which smolders like fire in damp wood is good–and the Lord so esteems it! “A bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench.”

As yet the light had not been divided from the darkness and the boundaries of day and night were not fixed. And it is so in young beginners–they hardly know which is Grace and which is nature, what is of themselves and what is of Christ–and they make a great many mistakes. Yet the Lord makes no mistake of that which His Grace has placed in them! They have so little discernment that they see and do not see, for they see men as trees walking, but God sees them clearly enough. It is neither day nor night with them–they are in a fog and lack power of discernment–but the Lord discerns them, for He knows them that are His. Let this be their joy that the Lord can analyze their condition and He knows what is light in them and approves it.

As yet the light and darkness had not been named–it was afterwards that the Lord called the light, “day,” and the darkness, “night.” Yet He saw the light that it was good. And so, though you do not know the names of things, God knows your name! Though you do not understand the doctrines so as to speak of them correctly, yet He understands you. Your ignorance of terms and names, your confusion of mind and childish misapprehensions will not provoke the Lord or make Him overlook the Grace which He

has worked in you. The sooner you can distinguish between things that differ, the better, but meanwhile the Lord distinguishes what is in you and loves the light which He has given you, for He never made a Grace which He did not love, and never worked a work in the soul of man which He did not approve!

The light of the first day could not reveal much of beauty, for there was none, and so, dear Friend, the light within does not yet reveal much to you–and what it does reveal is uncomely, but the light, itself, is good–whatever it may make manifest. If the Grace given you, my young Friend, only reveals the depravity of your nature. If it only shows you the cage of unclean birds within you and the wild beasts that rage and rave within your nature–if it only makes these growl in their dens more fiercely than ever because their reign is coming to an end–still it is light!

If it displays your nature as tossed about in sorry tumult and wretched disorder, yet the light is good, and God takes delight in it. When no varied landscape of land and sea, mountain and lake, meadow and forest charmed the eyes, yet the Lord approved the light which shone over the formless mass. Let this cheer and comfort you, that in the same manner you have the approbation of God upon whatever of Grace His hands have created within you. But why did God say that light was good? I suppose it was because its creation displayed His attributes. The instantaneous coming of

light revealed His power, His sovereignty, His goodness, His wisdom and His love.

He is not a God whose glory consists in darkness, but, “He covers Himself with light as with a garment.” Grace is a still more glorious manifestation of the Divine Character and in it God glorifies His name. The Grace that is in you has sufficed to show you the power and the justice of God–and something of His mercy and His love–and angels from Heaven have beheld the same sacred attributes in the Divine work within you. Therefore God loves Grace because it makes Him known in many of His glorious attributes. He loves the light, too, because it is like Himself, for “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”

Light is ethereal and almost spiritual, and therein like He who is a Spirit. Light makes manifest the Truth of God and therein is like the God of Truth. The Grace that is in you, if, indeed it is Grace, is yet more truly of the nature of God, for it is that living and incorruptible Seed by which you are made partakers of the Divine Nature and are enabled to escape the corruption which is in the world through lust. Satan is the Prince of the powers of darkness, but another principle, even that of the light of God dwells in the man who believes in Jesus–and this principle must be good–for it is of God.

Light is eminently good, for the Lord spent a whole day in creating and arranging it–a whole day out of six! This shows that

He attaches great importance to it. Moreover, He gave it the front rank by occupying the first day of creation's week upon it. Even thus the plan of Grace was early in the mind of God. It was and is His masterpiece and He has never yet placed it in the background. His eternal wisdom devised it from old and that same wisdom continues to dwell upon it all through this long day of Grace. The little Grace which is in you is approved of God, for it is the fruit of His thoughts of old, and by it He has begun His new creation in you.

I suppose that the Lord approved of the light because it was a seasonable thing. It was what was needed to begin with. Not but what God could work in the dark, for, as to natural light, in that respect darkness and light are both alike to Him. We can all see that the works of His creating skill needed light, for how could plants, animals and men live without it? Assuredly the sanctifying operations of the Spirit of God require light in the soul–the understanding must be enlightened, for true religion cannot flourish in ignorance–and until there is some knowledge of God none of the Graces can blossom.

When God the Holy Spirit new-creates a man, the first essential thing towards it is the illumination of his soul in knowledge and holiness, to know the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Because it is so essential, the Lord pronounces it good. So, then, dear Brothers and Sisters, I have shown you that God took delight in His

own work, and I have given you some reasons why He did so. Now, you trembling beginners, I want you to feel that if God approves of the Grace which He has worked in you, He will preserve it! He will not suffer the light which He kindles to be quenched by the world, the flesh, or the devil! Yes, He will improve it and cause your twilight to brighten into perfect day! I would to God that some poor, troubled one could catch this thought, for I remember well the time when it would have been exceedingly consoling to myself.

When I compared myself with older saints I feared that there was little of the Divine work in me. But if I had known, as now I rejoice to know, that God's work, even at the beginning, is approved by Him–that even the rudiments and elements of Grace in the soul are looked upon by Him with Divine complacency, I think my heart would have greatly rejoiced! I want you lambs of the flock to feed on this tender grass! It is sweet food, suitable to your young days. Fear not, little flock! Your Great Shepherd takes delight in you!

III. But now, thirdly, let me give you what will seem to be, but is not, the same thought–THE LORD QUICKLY DISCERNS ALL THE GOODNESS AND BEAUTY WHICH EXISTS IN WHAT HE CREATES. The Lord did not merely feel approbation for the light, but He perceived reason for it–He saw that it was good. He could see goodness in it where, perhaps, no one else would have been able to do so. Let us note, then, that light is good in itself and

so is Divine Grace. What a wonderful thing light is! Just think of it! How simple it is and yet how complex. Scarcely have the students of light been able, as yet, to discover a tenth of its various qualities!

Wonders have burst upon them, but there are many more to follow. What intertwisted colors go to make up the simplicity of the white light in which we rejoice? Grace, too, is simple yet complex. The Grace that quickens, the Grace that convicts of sin, the Grace that consoles, the Grace that instructs, the Grace that sustains, the Grace that sanctifies, the Grace that perfects–it is all a very simple matter, but how varied are its operations! How marvelous is the "all Grace" which God makes to abound unto us! Think of the triple ray which we find in Grace–the Grace of the Father in election, the Grace of the Son in redemption, the Grace of the Holy Spirit in regeneration! Consider, admire, and adore the manifold Grace of God!

Light, too, how common it is! We see it everywhere, and all the year round. The most despotic monarch cannot enclose the light for himself. The meanest beggar takes a royal share! It cannot be monopolized, but pays its gladsome visits to all alike. Even thus the Scriptures reveal the freeness of Divine Grace–and experience shows that it shines on the poorest and the simplest–it enlightens the foolish and the ignorant. Yet what a precious thing is light! Those who are blind, what would they not give to see it! And if you

and I were confined in a sepulcher, how earnestly should we long, once more, to walk in the light of Heaven.

So is the Grace of God priceless yet free to every eye that is able to drink it in. Light, too, how feeble and yet how strong! Its beams would not detain us one-half so forcibly as a cobweb, yet how mighty it is, and how supreme! Scarcely is there a force in the universe of God which is more potent. The Grace of God, in the same manner, is contemptible in the eyes of man, and yet the majesty of Omnipotence is in it, and it is more than conqueror! Light, too, as we have said before, how noiseless! You never hear its footsteps, and yet how effectual! So the Grace of God comes not with observation, but its transformations are unparalleled.

Light, too, how varied, as we see it in many phases and through differing mediums, and yet, how uniform! How uniformly good! Grace comes in many ways and works variously, yet it is always the same, and its results are always pure, lovely and of good repute. Well did God say that light was good, for who can make it otherwise? Who can defile it? The sunbeam lights on a dunghill, but its purity remains snow-white as the lily. Who can rob light of its beauty? Its excellence remains undimmed, though it pierces the gloom of a dark dungeon, feverish and full of loathsome filth. Light never ferments into darkness, nor decays into gloom. The leaves upon the trees have, in successive autumn blasts turned sere, and have fallen to the earth to rot, but no ray of light has ever withered!

Many changes the world has passed through, but light is the same, the glory of its youth is on it! The young sunbeams leap from the central fire and visit us on wings unwearied. They, themselves, being adorned with all the freshness of earth's birthday. Transfer all this to the Grace of God and it will bear to be emphasized. Grace cannot be depraved, it is always pure and good! It cannot be overcome, it will effect its purposes! It never corrupts, it is the seed of God which lives and abides forever! Oh, precious Grace, if you are in the soul–if, as yet, it is but your first day–you are good!

Light is good, not only in itself, but in its warfare. The light contended with darkness and it was good for darkness to be battled with. Grace has come unto you, young Friend, and it will fight with your sins–and your sins ought to be fought with–and to be overcome! The light which came from God was good in its measure. There was neither too much of it nor too little. If the Lord had sent a little more light into the world we might all have been dazzled into blindness, and if He had sent less we might have groped in gloom. God sends into the new-born Christian just as much Grace as he can bear–He does not give him the maturity of later years, for it would be out of place.

Did not Jesus say, "I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now." Dawn is good as well as noontide. A babe in Grace is beautiful and the Grace in him is suitable to his condition. Do not, dear Brother, judge the babe because he has not

the light and the Grace which belong to a full-grown man, for that would be unreasonable. Light was good as a preparation for God's other works. The great Creator was about to make plants. What could plants do without light? He knew that He would soon make fowl that fly in the open firmament, and beasts that graze the meadows–is not light needed by all these?

He knew that light, though it was but the beginning, was necessary to the completion of His work. Light was necessary that the eyes of man might rejoice in the works of God and so God saw the light that it was good in connection with what was to be. And, oh, I charge you who have to deal with young people, look at the Grace they have in them in relation to what will be in them! Think not so much of the weakness of it as of the fact that it is only the green blade! Let your faith see the golden ear which will come from that tender shoot! See the oak in the acorn, the man in the child–and call them good!

What a mass of thought one might raise from this one Truth of God of the goodness of light and the goodness of Grace, as to their results. Light produces the beauty which adorns the world, for without it all the world were uncomely blackness. Light's brush paints the whole and even so all beauty of character is the result of Grace. Light sustains life, for life, in due time, would dwindle and die out without it, and thus Grace, alone, sustains the virtues and blessings of the Believer. Without daily Grace we should be

spiritually dead! Light heals many sicknesses and Grace brings healing in its wings. Light is comfort, light is joy, the prisoner in his darkness knows it to be so. And so the Grace of God produces joy and peace wherever it is shed abroad.

Light reveals and so does Grace, for without it we could not see the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. O to walk in the light as God is in the light so that we may have fellowship with Him! O Lord, "send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me! Let them bring me unto Your holy hill." You see, now, that God perceived in light a mass of latent good and, in the same manner, He perceives, in the first work of Grace in the soul, an amount of good which the soul, itself, knows nothing of, and which even Christian observers, with kindly eyes, would not be able to detect.

IV. This leads me to close with a practical observation, namely, that GOD RECORDED HIS ESTIMATE OF THIS FIRST DAY'S PRODUCT. Here we have His judgement expressed–"God saw the light that it was good." This leads me to say to the young Christian, the Lord would have you encouraged. You have been looking at yourself since you have been converted and, perhaps, you have grown desponding, and have cried, "Alas, I am vile! I did not know all that was in me!"

No, and you do not know all that is in you now. "But I am so bad." Let me assure you, you are a great deal worse than you think you are. "Alas, Sir, I see enough to drive me to despair." Yes, but if

you could see the whole truth about yourself, you would be driven to self-despair 10 times over! You are so bad as to be hopeless! And you had better know it, too! I often thank God for teaching me early that my old nature was dead and corrupt, so that nothing has surprised me since. I commenced as a penniless bankrupt and I have, therefore, never become poorer! I began naked and, therefore, I have never lost a rag! I was dead, utterly dead, and therefore I have lost no strength!

It is a necessary thing for you to know that in your flesh there dwells no good thing. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither, indeed, can be." Put that down at the first, as an ascertained fact, and then nothing will amaze you afterwards! Your nature is incorrigible and incurable! But there is gracious light in you which God has put there and God delights in you because of it. Though you may have been born to God but a week ago and are a poor little crying baby in the nursery of the Lord's house, yet your Father loves you and sets great store by the Grace He has given you! Now, do not be downcast! Say to yourself, "The Lord has said that the faith which He has given me is good. He has said that this little love that I have for Him is good. I will be encouraged, for if He has begun a good work in me, He will carry it on."

My last word is to older Christian people. If the Lord says that His work in the first day is good, I want you to say so, too. Do not

wait till you see the second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth day before you feel confidence in the convert and offer him fellowship. If God speaks encouragingly so soon, I want you to do the same. A few words to a young Christian will be greatly helpful to him and his weakness craves them. Those of us who have been a long while in the Lord's ways ought to be ashamed if we are gruff, and sour, and critical. You know it was the elder brother, not one of the younger ones, who said, "This your son has come, who has devoured your living with harlots," and so on.

Do not degenerate into the elder brother's spirit, I pray you. You must grow older in years, but endeavor to remain young at heart. There is a tendency to look for far too much in young converts and to expect in them a great deal more than we shall ever see. This is wrong. We shall not do them much good by criticizing them, but we may greatly benefit them by encouraging them. We have all read in the papers this week about Captain Webb's swimming across the channel, and we noticed that every now and then his friends gave him a cheer. Would that help him? No doubt it did! There is nothing like a cheer to a fellow when he feels faint and weak.

Give the weak brother a cheer, I say! When you meet with a young Believer who is tossed about, give him a cheer! Give him a hearty cheer! Tell him some choice promise! Tell him how the Lord helped you. Your few words may not be much to you, but they will

be very much to him. Whereas the black look, which, perhaps, you really did not mean, may chill him to the very marrow of his bones! Many a poor young Christian has been frostbitten by the coldness of stern professors. Let us make a rule to encourage the young and help them forward, for that work of encouragement may affect the whole of their future history.

As the Lord said the first day was good, so He said the same right on, till at last He declared that it was “very good.” In this way I trust it will be “good” with young converts from beginning to end. That early blessing which you may be the means of bestowing upon the young Christian may be the first of thousands of commendations which shall culminate in, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” At any rate, if you do this, my dear Brothers and Sisters, it will reveal in you a God-like disposition. The Lord said that the first day’s work was good! Be as God is, ready to see the good, if it is ever so little, and ready to speak well of it! It will be for your own comfort to see and commend the young work of Grace.

If you have an eye to spy out what is good, either in young people or old people, it will be a very happy faculty. Those who have a keen eye for others' faults are wretched beings. They look at the sun and they say, “He has spots.” Then they gaze at the moon and observe that its light is very pale. Better be blind than see in this fashion! Let it not be so among you! But as God saw the light that

it was good, so do you look for it and rejoice in it. Be on the side of weak Grace and your own Grace will grow stronger. Comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all and in holy charity think no evil, but rejoice in the Truth of God. PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON–Genesis 1.HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK.”–104, 205, 891.

Ge 1:7 • And It Was So

SERMON 3064

"And It Was So"

"And it was so."

Genesis 1:7

You will find those words six times upon the first page of Scripture. God spoke and said, "Let there be a firmament." "And it was so." He said, "Let the dry land appear." "And it was so." He bade the earth bring forth grass, "And it was so." He ordained the sun and moon for lights in the firmament of Heaven. "And it was so." Whatever it was that He willed, He did but speak the Word, "and it was so." In no single case was there a failure. There was not even a hesitation, a pause or a demand for a more powerful agency than the Divine Word. In each case, Jehovah spoke, "and it was

so.” Nor is this first week of Creation the only instance of the kind, for in no case has the Word of God fallen to the ground–whether of promise or of threat–the Word has been confirmed and fulfilled. “As it was in the beginning, it is now, and ever shall be, world without end.” Whatever the mighty God decrees, foretells, declares, or promises shall, before long come to pass.

I shall ask you to accompany me in a mental voyage down the stream of history to show that this has been the case asfar as all history is concerned up till now. “And it was so.” The Lord’s will has been Law. His Word has been followed by fact. Dictum factum, it will be socontinually in the great and in the small–in the affairs of the world–and in our own personal matters. What God has promised shall come to pass! And at the winding-up of all history, it shall be said, “God said this and that, and it was so.”

We stand at the fountainhead of human history and hear the Lord declare to our parents that in the day in which they should break His commands and eat of the forbidden fruit, they would surely die. “And it was so.” They died that moment. That spiritual death which was the great and essential part of the sentence, was then and there fulfilled! Thelikeness and image of God was broken in them immediately and we are dead in trespasses and in sins by reason of their death. He also warned them when His wrath, as it were, glanced aslant from them to smite the soil on which they stood, that the earth would bring forth thorns and thistles to them, and that in

the sweat of their face they should eat bread, and truly it has been so. The earth has yielded her harvest, but she has produced her thorns and briars, also. And though the curse of labor has become a blessing, yet man's toil and woman's travail vindicate the Divine veracity.

When all flesh had corrupted its way, God repented that He had made man, and sent His servant Noah as a preacher of righteousness to threaten a universal flood. It did not appear very probable that the dense population of the earth could all be swept away and that the billows should rear their proud heads above the mountains–but it turned out that Noah was no fool and his prophecy was no raving. God had said that the world should be drowned "and it was so." The sluices of the great deep beneath were drawn up, the cataracts of Heaven descended and none escaped, save the few–that is eight–whom God enclosed within the ark.

A little further on the Lord appeared to His servant Abraham and told him that the wickedness of Sodom had been so great that the cry had gone up even to His Throne and the Lord communicated to His servant that He would go and see if it was altogether according to the cry thereof. And if so, Sodom would be destroyed. Abraham pleaded and his intercession almost prevailed, but as no righteous salt was found in the filthy cities of the plain, they were doomed to perish. They had given themselves to strange flesh and a strange

judgment must, therefore, come upon them. Hell must fall out of Heaven upon such abominable offenders! “ And it was so,” for when the morning dawned, Sodom was utterlyconsumed and the smoke thereof went up to Heaven.

You know how God kept His Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who were strangers with Him, dwelling in tents, looking for a better city, that is, a heavenly. Whatever promise was made to the Patriarchs was fulfilled to the letter! In all respects, “it was so.” When they went down into Egypt, God declared that after 400 years He would bringthem out and though the tribes appeared to be naturalized in Egypt and were rooted to the soil, yet God would bring them forth. And though Pharaoh took strong measures and thought to hold them fast, yet God had said that they should come out with a high hand and an outstretched arm–“and it was so.” Let the wonders which He worked on the fields ofZoan, the plagues which overthrew the sons of Ham, the going forth out of Egypt and the terrors of the Red Sea when the depths covered all the chivalry of Egypt–let these remind you that God had spoken–and so it was. Pharaoh was hardened, but he was not able to resist the will of the Almighty! He stands forever in history as a memorial that none shall harden himself against the Most High and prosper, for the Lord does as He wills in Heaven and on earth and in all deep places! Has He said, and shall He not do it? “Is anything too hard for the Lord?”

I would not weary you, I think, if I were to dwell a little while upon the promise that God gave to Israel that He would lead the tribes through the wilderness and surely bring them to their inheritance. It appeared very unlikely that they would ever enter into Canaan, when, for 40 weary years, they wandered in the pathless wilderness. Yet the Jordan was crossed in due season and Jericho was taken. He said that they should, every man, possess his portion and each tribe its lot–“and it was so.” The Canaanites dwelt in cities that were walled up to Heaven and they dashed into the battle in chariots of iron, yet they were overcome, for God had said it–“and it was so.” He cast out the heathen and planted the vine which He had brought out of Egypt. He overthrew Og and Sihon, “and gave their land for an heritage; for His mercy endures forever.” Many a time, after Israel had been settled in the land, did they provoke the Lord to jealousy, so that He sent Prophet after Prophet, and their message was, “If you thus sin against the Lord, you shall be given into the hands of your enemies …"and it was so.” But when they were sorely smitten, they repented and they cried unto God andHe had pity upon them. And then He sent another of His servants with a gentle message, saying, “Turn unto Me, and repent, and I will deliver you.” “And it was so.”

In every case He kept His Word, whether for chastening them or delivering them. Evermore was He faithful. When, in the later period of their history, Sennacherib blasphemed the Lord, His

servant Hezekiah took the cruel letter of Rabshakeh and laid it before the Lord in the Temple and cried mightily unto Him–and Isaiah came with the promise, “He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it.” Who could put the hook into the nose of that leviathan? Who could turn him back by the way that he came? The Lord had said it should be done–“and it was so”–for that night the destroying Angel went through the host of Assyriansand there fell corpses on the plain as many as the leaves of autumn! Has God promised to rescue His children? Then be assured this, however numerous their foes, His Word shall not fail! Then came that dark day when Israel and Judah were threatened with captivity in a strange land. They sinned and, lo, “it was so.” They were exiled far away. By the waters of Babylon they sat down and wept. They wept when they remembered Zion. But there came a promise to them–a promise which they had left all unread and forgotten in their Sacred Books, that after the lapse of 70 years they should return again and once more see the land of their fathers–“and it was so.” God raised up for them a friend and a helper–and the captives came back again to their land.

Let us quote the grandest instance of all. The Lord promised, immediately after the Fall, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head. That promise had been succeeded by many others and those in Israel who knew the Lord waited for the

coming of the Deliverer. The promise tarried long. Day and night devout man cried unto God, for their patience was sorely tried, yet they confidently expected the Messenger of God who would suddenly come in His Temple–and when the fullness of time was come, "it was so." The everlasting God was found living among men and they "beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father , full of Grace and Truth." It was the master-promise of all–the promise of the greatest gift that God has ever bestowed upon mankind! And that promise was kept, kept to the letter and to the hour. He had said it should be, "and it was so," though it was a wonder beyond all wonders!

We might pursue our theme and show you that as far as all past events have gone, God's Word has been verified. But now, though we keep to history, we shall leave the large volume of the public records and ask you to take down from its shelf that little diary of yours, the pocketbook of your own life story–and then observe how God's Word has been true. You remember the warnings that you received in your youth, when you were told that the ways of sin might be pleasantness at first, but would end in sorrow. You were told that the cup might sparkle at the brim, but that the dregs thereof were full of bitterness. Did you test that statement in the days of your early manhood? Ah, then I know you cannot deny that it was as God had declared. He said, "The wages of sin is death"–"and it was so." He said it would be bitterness in the end

thereof, “and it was so.” He told you that the fascinations of sin were as destructive as they were alluring and truly, “it was so.” If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, you will blush as you answer the question, “What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed?”

It fell on a day, as God would have it, that your eyes were opened to see your lost estate. And there was a voice which spoke in the Gospel and said, “If you will return unto Me, return. Only confess the transgressions that you have sinnedagainst Me, and I will forgive you. Come and put your trust in My Son, and your iniquity shall be blotted out like a cloud and your transgressions like a thick cloud.” Led by Sovereign Grace, you came to Jesus. You washed in the fountain of His blood, guided to it by the Holy Spirit. What is your testimony? You were promised salvation, pardon, peace. My testimony is–and it was so! Is not that yours also? Oh, the joy of believing in Jesus! Oh, the bliss of casting one’s self into the Father’s arms and pleading the merits of the Only-Begotten! There is a peace of God that passes all understanding which comes to our faith when we exercise it upon Christ! Peace was promised–“and it was so.”

Since the time when you believed in Jesus, you have had many needs, both spiritual and temporal, but He has promised no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. What say you, Brothers and Sisters? Your needs have come–have the supplies

also come? I am sure you will say, “it was so”–strangely so–but always so! As your day, your strength has been. The shoes of iron and of brass have had rough usage, but they have not worn out. The all-sufficient God has proved that His Grace is all-sufficient for us. Our personal history bears witness that with regard to the Providence of God and to the supplies of His Grace, He said that He would grant us enough, “and it was so.” He told you that when you believed in His Word, He would hear your prayers. Three times He put it in varied form, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Brothers and Sisters have been to the Mercy Seat and tried whether God hears prayer, and it has been so–He did hear prayer! We believed His Word and in due time our faith has been turned to sight and the promise has been fulfilled. We have read in God’s Word that He would sanctify our trials to us and that, “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” What then, is my witness, after having been week after week and even month after month racked with pain and laid low with sickness? What have these things been to me? Have they worked to my good? Do they bring forth the peaceable fruit of righteousness? My truthful witness is, “and it was so.” I feel persuaded that every Christian shall have to say of his afflictions that they have been blessed to him–“Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word,” said one of

old. And many in these modern times can say the same. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted”–the Lord said it would be–“and it was so.”

Up to this hour it has always been true with regard to us, His people, that what the Lord has said, He has surely performed. We can–

“Sing the sweet promise of His Grace,

And the performing God.”

Let me remind you that our history is only the common experience of all God’s people and if there is anything uncommon in the stories of the saints, then there is only a more than usually clear confirmation of the Truth of God. Look at the martyrs–they suffered what we can scarcely bear to read of–yet the Lord said He would be with them. “And it was so.” They wore the chain for Christ’s sake and He promised to be their companion –“and it was so.” Theywent to the stake or bowed their head to the axe and they were promised that even to the end He would be with them–“and it was so.” Right along through all the history of the Church militant and, I might also ask the confirmation of the Church triumphant, too–the saints declare that “it was so.” Christ has kept His Word to the letter! Not one good thing has failed of all that He ever promised to His people!

II. And now, having taken this very brief run through history, let me ask you to follow me when I say that, AS IT HAS BEEN IN

THE PAST, SO IT WILL BE IN THE FUTURE!

It is always good reasoning, when we are dealing with God, to infer the future from the past. “Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.” Having the same God and the same promises, we may expect to always see the same results. As for the future, a large part of Scripture is as yet unfulfilled. Many persons try to interpret it, but the man is not born who can explain the Revelation. Yet, whatever God has there declared will be explained by the working out of His Providence–

“God is His own Interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”

Whatever He has there promised, it shall be said of it, by-and-by, “and it was so.” We learn that there is to be a widespread of the Gospel. It is written, “All flesh shall see the salvation of God.” “Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.” Therefore be assured that it shall be so! Let the missionary toil on and the devil rage on if he will–the devil shall be disappointed and the servant of God shall have his heart’s desire! God will honor His Church when she has faith enough to believe in His promises.

There is to be, in the fullness of time, a Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. He who went up from Olivet sent two of His angelic servants to promise that in the same manner as He went up into Heaven, He would return again. He shall surely come. Virgin souls who are awake and watching for the midnight cry will hear it

before long. And when He comes, “the dead in Christ shall rise first”–there shall be a resurrection of the just at His appearing. So He has promised" and, “blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power.” There are no bonds of death that can hold the saints in their graves when the Lord descends at the sound of the archangel’s trumpet! God has said that they shall arise–and it shall be so. They shall, everyone of them, return from the land of the enemy and then will follow the millennial glory–we will not explain that splendor–but we know that it is promised, and that whatever has been foretold by God shall surely be! The saints shall possess the Kingdom and shall reign with Christ!

And Heaven and the eternal future in the Glory Land where the ever-blessed God shall reveal Himself unto His servants, “and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads”–every golden word, every sapphire sentence which glows and sparkles with the Glory of the Most High and the loving kindness of the Infinite shall be fulfilled! It shall be said of the whole, “and it was so.” Yes! And concerning the dread future of the lost–those awful words that tell of fires that burn and yet do not consume–and of a wrath that slays and yet men live beneath its power–verily, verily, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal!” These shall all be fulfilled! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one Word that God has spoken shall

fail. Of doom or of glory, of promise or of threat, it shall be said, “and it was so.” And when the end shall come and Christ shall deliver up theKingdom to God, even the Father, and the drama of history shall be ended and the curtain shall drop and God shall be All-in-All–all shall be summed up in this sentence, “He spoke, and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast,” He said it, “and it was so.”

I desire, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, for your consolation, to bring this Truth of God home to yourselves, if the Spirit of God will enable me. “It was so”–this has been true and it shall be so to you. God’s promises shall all bekept to you personally. God will fulfill His Word to you in every letter. Observe there will occur cases in which there willbe no visible help toward the fulfillment of the Divine Promise and no tendencies that way. But if God has pledged His Word, He will keep it. Note well that in the creation of the world there was nothing to help God. “With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him?” When He began to fit up the world for man and to furnish the house which He had made in the beginning, there was darkness and that was no aid. There was chaos and that was no help. Now you are troubled at the present time. Your condition is one of confusion, disorder, darkness–you see nothing that could make God’s promise come true, not a finger to help–no one even to wish you well. Never mind! God needs no helper. He works gloriously alone. See how the earth stands. What

does it hang on? “He hangs the earth upon nothing.” Look at the unpillared arch above it. There are no buttresses, no supports, no props to the sky–yet it has not fallen and it never will. “Trust you in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” And if He has given you a promise and you have laid hold upon it, though nothing should appear to aid its fulfillment, yet it shall be fulfilled! You will have to write, “and it was so.”

Yes, and this shall be the case though many circumstances tend the other way. When there seems to be a conflict against God–not only no help, but much resistance–then do not fear. What does it matter to God? Though all the men on earth and all the devils in Hell were against Him, what does it matter? Though heaps of chaff contend against the wind, what does it matter to the wind? They shall be whirled along in its fury! What if the wax shall defy the flame? It shall but melt in the fervent heat! If all the world and all Hell should declare that God will not keep His promise, yet He will perform it and we shall have to say, “it was so.” No opposition can stop the Lord!

But you may say, “This cannot be true, surely, in my case. I could have believed it on a great scale, but not for myself.” Ah, does God speak Truth in great things, and lies in little ones? Will you blaspheme the Most High by imagining that in public acts of royalty He is true, but in the private deeds of His family He is false? What would be a worse imputation against a man than that?

Who shall throw such a charge upon the eternal God? The Lord promised His servant Elijah that He would take care of him. Did He not make the ravens feed him? Did He not send him to the widow of Sarepta and multiply her meal and her oil? He was as true to him in the ravens' matter, and in the handful of meal matter, as when, in the business of the great rain, the Prophet bowed his head between his knees on Carmel and saw at length the heavens covered with clouds and the land deluged with showers! God will keep His Word in little things to you. Do not imagine that He forgets your little problems. The hairs of your head are numbered. A sparrow lights not on the ground without your Father. Are you not better than the sparrows which are sold at five for two farthings in the market? Will you not rest in your Father's care and believe that His promises shall be fulfilled and that your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure and you shall dwell in the land and verily, you shall be fed?

God's Word stands true even when our unworthiness is in the way. I know you have fancied, "If I were a great saint, God would surely keep His Word to me. But I, being a very grievous sinner, how shall He be gracious to me?" And do you think that God is good and truthful only to the good and true? Would you be so yourself? Surely we must deal honestly with all men, whoever they may be! Their character is no excuse for our unfaithfulness to our own promises. Our Lord Jesus has said, "Him that comes to Me I

will in no wise cast out." And if you come to God, He will not cheat you and say, "I said, 'Who confesses and forsakes his sins shall have mercy,' but I did not mean the promise for such an one as you are." No, Christ has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out" and if you come to Him, though you are the blackest sinner out of Hell, yet Christ will not reject you, for it is not your character, but His Character that is to beconsidered in the promise! Even "if we believe not, yet He abides faithful–He cannot deny Himself."

Yes, and His promise comes true and we have to say of it, "and it was so," even in cases of our own confessedincapacity to receive it. Take the case of Abraham, for that is typical of many others in this respect. He had the promise of a son and heir. And though, as for his own body, it was as dead and Sarah was well stricken in years, Abraham did not consider himself or Sarah, but believed the promise and, in the fullness of time, there was the sound of laughter in the tent, for Isaac was born! We err when we become so depressed by our own incapacity as to conceive doubts of God's faithfulness. The Lord gives the promise that the barren woman shall keep house–and it is so. Our desert-hearts shallhave the blessing–it shall drop upon the pastures of the wilderness and the little hills shall rejoice on every side! Our weakness shall not hinder the fulfillment of the Divine Promise. God is able to bless us even when we feel only fit to be cursed. O empty one, God can fill

you! O dried branch and withered tree, you that stand like an oak smitten by lightning, only fit for the burning–the Lord, the everlasting God–can quicken you and put fresh sap in you, and make your branches to bud again to the glory of His holy name! He promises and if you believe, you shall have to say, "and it wasso."

It will be thus right on to the end of the chapter. A few days ago I stood by the side of a dear departing Brother who feebly lifted his hands from the bed and said just these few words, "Christ, Christ, Christ is All." And then he said, as I bade him "Good-bye," "We shall meet in Heaven. I shall go there soon and you will follow, but I hope it will be a long while before you do." I asked him whether that was quite a benediction and he said, "You know what I mean. The Church needs you." About half-past five this afternoon, he who rejoiced that he would soon be in Heaven entered within the gate of pearl! He had served us well as a deacon of this Church and now he sees the face of the Ever-Blessed. He believed, while here on earth, that it was bliss to be with Christ and he finds it so! He is saying, "The half has not been told me." Well, well, whether we live to old age, or depart in mid-life, or die in early youth, what does it matter? We shall find that passing across the river is delightful when at eventide it is light. And oh, the glory of the everlasting daybreak! The splendor of the sun that goes down no more! Oh, the bliss of beholding saints and angels, and seeing the King in His beauty! The messengers of God said that Heaven is

blessed–and it is so–it is so! The voice from Heaven said, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," and it is so! [See Sermon #1219, Volume 21–A VOICE FROM HEAVEN–Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]

I would leave a thought with those who are exercised with doubts and fears about the Lord's sure mercies. It is a very hard thing that we should doubt our God, but we do. And therefore let us shoot arrows at unbelief. Note well that when God spoke in the Creation, "and it was so," there was only His power concerned. Supposing He had spoken and it had not been so? Then the only result would have been that God was proved not to be Omnipotent. But His might did not fail Him! His glorious attribute of power showed its majesty and what the Lord spoke was accomplished. Yet, in this instance, only one attribute was at stake. Now, when you consider any one of God's promises recorded in the Bible, there is more than one attribute engaged for its fulfillment–there are at least two–for there is the Divine Truth at stake as well as the Divine Power. If He said it should be and it is not, it is either that He would not or He could not–if He could not, then His power has failed. But if He would not when He promised, then His truth is forfeited! We have, therefore, a double hold when dealing with Covenant promises and may rest in two Immutable things wherein it is impossible for God to lie!

But sometimes, in certain promises, even more is observable. For instance, you who have known the Lord these 10 or 20 years, have been helped before. But suppose the Lord were to fail you now? Then not only would His Power and His Truth be compromised, but His Immutability also, since He would then have changed and would no longer be the sameGod today as He was yesterday! Three attributes are leagued upon your side–you have three sacred pledges for the fulfillment of the promise! Frequently you also have God's Wisdom brought into the affair in hand. You have been in great difficulty and you have seen no means of escape. But you have laid the case before God and left it there. He has inspired His servant David to say, "Cast your burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain you." Now, if He does not sustain you, there are four attributes at stake! His Power–can He do it? His Truth–will He keep His promise? His Immutability–has He changed? His Wisdom–can He find a way of escape?

Frequently, my Brothers and Sisters, the Lord's honor is also brought into the field in addition to the otherattributes. You recollect how Moses put it when the Lord said, "Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them." Then Moses said, "Why should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth?" See, too, how Joshua uses the same argument with the Lord–"The

Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it…and what will You do unto Your great name?" Oh, that is grand pleading–that is grand pleading! Now if the Lord has brought you into deep waters and you have put your trust in Him and said, "I know that He will deliver me." If He does not do so, the enemy will say, "It is a vain thing to trust in God, for the Lord does not deliver His people." His honor is at stake and, ah, He is a jealous God! He will rouse Himself and go forth like a man of war to show Himself strong in the behalf of them that trust in Him!

In addition to all this, Divine Love is included in the issue. How did Moses put it? The people said, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness." And Moses argued thus with the Lord, "Did You bring all these people out of Egypt that they might die in the wilderness? Have You no love to them? Will You be cruel to the sons of men?" Even thus may we plead with the benevolence and pity of the Lord. "Will the Lord cast off forever? Will He be favorable no more?" Oh, no, that cannot be! Each child of His can sing–

"And can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me, to put me to shame?"

"Is it so that He has taught me long after the sweetness of His Grace and yet will He deny it to me? Does the Lord tantalize men in this way? I could have been happy enough in my poor ignorant way as a sinner, but now that I have been made to taste of higher

and sweeter things, I shall be doubly wretched if I may not enjoy them! If He makes men hunger and thirst, and then does not feed them, He is not a God of love." But He is a God of love and, therefore, He cannot treatHis servants so! You remember Luther used to say that when he saw that God was in his quarrel, he always felt safe. "Your honor is at stake," he would say, "and it is no business of Luther's–it is God's business when God's Gospel is concerned." Every Divine Attribute is pledged as a guarantee that every Divine Promise shall be kept! Here faith may gather strength, and rest assured that the Covenant is sure in every jot and tittle! If one child of God who has put his trust in Jesus should perish, the everlasting Covenant of Grace would have failed, for this is a part of its stipulations,will I put within you." And if I have come to Jesus and rested in Him and, after all, do not find salvation and eternal life, then the Covenant has become a dead letter to me–and this it shall never be! "Although my house is not so with God, yet has He made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure." He will not allow His promise to fail!

Last word of all, remember that the very blood of Christ is at stake in the matter of God's Promise. If a poor guilty sinner shall come and rest in Jesus and yet is not saved, then Jesus Christ is grievously dishonored–He has shed His blood in vain! Shall they perish on whom His blood is sprinkled? Has the Fountain, after all its boasted efficacy, become a mockery? Is there no power in the

Atonement of Jesus to cleanse the guilty? Ah, Beloved, He said it would cleanse and it was so, it is so and it shall be so forever! They who rest in Christ shall not perish, neither shall anyone pluck them out of His hand. Each one of us, as we arrive in Heaven, shall add our testimony to the general verdict of all the saints and say, “It was so. He said it and He fulfilled it. Glory be unto His name!” If any soul comes to Jesus at this hour, he shall find eternal life. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Such is the Gospel. The Lord grant His great blessing!

Ge 3:1 • An Antidote to Satan's Devices

SERMON 2707

A*n Antidote To Satan's Devices*

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made."

Genesis 3:1

WE understand, of course, that this verse refers to "that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan." The Samaritan Version reads, instead of the word, "serpent," "deceiver," or "liar." If this is not the genuine reading, it nevertheless certainly declares a Truth of God. That old deceiver, of whom our Lord Jesus said to the Jews. "When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it," was "more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." God has been pleased to give to many

beasts subtlety–to some, subtlety and cunning combined with strength–in order that they may be the more destructive to certain classes of animals whose numbers require to be kept under. To others, devoid of very much strength, He has been pleased to give instincts of most marvelous wisdom for selfpreservation and the destruction of their prey, and for the procuring of their food. But the subtlety of Satan far excels the wise instincts and subtlety of all the beasts of the field by far. In fact, to go further, man has, perhaps, far more cunning than any mere creature, although animal instinct sometimes seems as if it did outride human reason–but Satan has more of cunning within him than any other creature that the Lord God has made, man included.

Satan has abundant craft and is able to overcome us for several reasons. I think it would be a sufficient reason that Satan should be cunning because he is malicious–for malice is, of all things, the most productive of cunning. When aman is determined on revenge, it is strange how cunning he is to discover opportunities to vent his spite. Let a man have enmity against another, and let that enmity thoroughly possess his soul, and pour venom, as it were, into his very blood, and he will become exceedingly crafty in the means he uses to annoy and injure his adversary! Now, nobody can be more full of malice against man than Satan is, as he proves every day–and that malice sharpens his inherent wisdom, so that he becomes exceedingly subtle.

Besides, Satan is an angel, though a fallen one. We doubt not, from certain hints in Scripture, that he occupied avery high place in the hierarchy of angels before he fell. And we know that those mighty beings are endowed with vast intellectual powers, far surpassing any that has ever been given to beings of human mold. Therefore, we must not expect that a man, unaided from above, should ever be a match for an angel, especially an angel whose native intellect has been sharpened by a most spiteful malice against us.

Again, Satan may well be cunning now–I may truthfully say, more cunning than he was in the days of Adam–for he has had long dealings with the human race. This was his first occasion of dealing with mankind, when he tempted Eve, but he was, even then, "more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." Since then he has exercised all his diabolical thought and mighty powers to annoy and ruin men. There is not a saint whom he has not beset and not a sinner whom he has not misled. Together with his troops of evil spirits, he has been continually exercising a terrible control over the sons of men. He is, therefore, well skilled in all the arts of temptation. Never anatomist so well understood the human body as Satan does the human soul. He has not been "tempted in all points," but he has tempted others in all points. He has tried to assail our manhood from the crown of our head to the

sole of our foot–and he has explored every outwork of our nature–and even the most secret caverns of our souls.

He has climbed into the citadel of our heart and he has lived there. He has searched its inmost recesses and dived into its most profound depths. I suppose there is nothing of human nature that Satan cannot unravel and though, doubtless, he is the biggest fool that ever existed, as time continually proves, yet, beyond all doubt, he is the craftiest of fools, and I may add, that is no great paradox, for craft is always folly and is but another shape of departure from wisdom.

And now, Brothers and Sisters, I shall, for a few minutes, first occupy your time by noticing the craft and subtlety ofSatan and the modes in which he attacks our souls. And secondly, I shall give you a few words of admonition with regard to

the wisdom that we must exercise against him and the only means that we can effectually use to prevent his subtlety from being the instrument of our destruction.

Let us notice, in the first place, THE CRAFT AND SUBTLETY OF SATAN as we have discovered it in our own experience.

And I may begin by observing that Satan discovers his craft and subtlety by the modes of his attack. There is a manwho is calm, quiet and at ease. Satan does not attack that man with unbelief or distrustfulness–he attacks him in a more vulnerable point, than that–self-love, self-confidence, worldliness. These will be the

weapons which Satan will use against him. There is another person who is noted for lowness of spirits and lack of mental vigor. It is not probable that Satan will endeavor to puff him up with pride, but examining him and discovering where his weak point is, he will tempt him to doubt his calling and endeavor to drive him to despair! There is another man of strong robust bodily health, having all his mental powers in full and vigorous exercise, enjoying the promises and delighting in the ways of God. Satan will possibly not attack him with unbelief because he feels that he has armor for that particular point, but he will attack him with pride, or with some temptation to lust. He will most thoroughly and carefully examine us–and if he shall find us to be like Achilles, vulnerable nowhere else but in our heel, then he will shoot his arrows at our heel.

I believe that Satan has not often attacked a man in a place where he saw him to be strong. He generally looks well for the weak point, the besetting sin. “There,” he says, “there will I strike the blow!” And God help us in the hour of battle and in the time of conflict! We have need to say, “God help us!” for, indeed, unless the Lord should help us, this crafty foe might easily find enough joints in our armor to soon send the deadly arrow into our souls so that we should fall down wounded before him. And yet I have noticed, strangely enough, that Satan does sometimes tempt men with the very thing which you might suppose would never come

upon them. What do you imagine was John Knox's last temptation upon his dying bed? Perhaps there never was a man who more fully understood the great doctrine that "by Grace are you saved," than John Knox did. He thundered it out from the pulpit and if you had questioned him upon the subject, he would have declared it to you boldly and bravely, denying with all his might the Popish doctrine of salvation through human merit. But, will you believe it, that old enemy of souls attacked John Knox with self-righteousness when he lay adying? He came to him, and said, "How bravely you have served your Master, John! You have never quailed before the face of man. You have faced kings and princes, and yet you have never trembled! Such a man as you are may walk into the Kingdom of Heaven on your own footing and wear your own garment at the wedding of the Most High!" And sharp and terrible was the struggle which John Knox had with the enemy of souls over that temptation.

I can give you a similar instance from my own experience. I thought within myself that of all the beings in the world, I was the most free from care. It had never exercised my thoughts a moment, I think, to care for temporals–I had always had all I needed, and I seemed to have been removed beyond the reach of anxiety about such matters. And yet, strange to say, but a little while ago, a most frightful temptation overtook me, casting me into worldliness of care and thought–and though I lay and groaned in agony, and

wrestled with all my might against the temptation, it was long before I could overcome these distrustful thoughts with regard to God's Providence, when, I must confess, there was not the slightest reason, as far as I could see, why such thoughts should break in upon me! For that reason, and for many more, I hate the devil worse and worse every day, and I have vowed, if it is possible, by preaching the Word of God to seek to shake the very pillars of his kingdom! And I think all God's servants will feel that their enmity against the arch-enemy of souls increases every day because of the malevolent and strange attacks that he is continually making upon us.

The modes of Satan's attack, then, as you will speedily learn, if you have not already done so, betray his subtlety. Ah, sons of men, while you are putting on your helmets, he is seeking to thrust his fiery sword into your heart! Or while you are looking well to your breastplate, he is lifting up his battle-ax to split your skull! And while you are seeing to both helmet and breastplate, he is seeking to trip up your feet. He is always watching to see where you are not looking–he is always on the alert when you are slumbering. Take heed to yourselves, therefore. "Put on the whole armor of God." "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith." And God help you to prevail over him!

A second thing in which Satan betrays his cunning is the weapons which he will often use against us. Sometimes hewill attack the child of God with the remembrance of a ribald song, or a licentious joke which he may have heard in the days of his carnal state. But far more frequently he will attack him with texts of Scripture! It is strange that it should be so, but it often is the case that when he shoots his arrow against a Christian, he wings it with God's own Word! That seemed to be, according to the poet, the very poignancy of grief, that the eagle, when the arrow was drinking up his heart's blood, saw that the feather that winged it to his bosom had been plucked from his own breast! And the Christian will often have a somewhat similar experience. "Ah," he will say, "here is a text that I love, taken from the Book that I prize, yet it is turned against me. A weapon out of God's own armory is made to be the instrument of death against my soul." Have you not found it so, dear Christian Friends? Have you not proved that, as Satan attacked Christ with an, "It is written," so also has he attacked you? And have you not learned to be on your guard against perversions of Sacred Scripture, and twisting of God's Word, lest they should lead you to destruction?

At other times, Satan will use the weapon of our own experience. "Ah," the devil will say, "on such-and-such a day, you sinned in such-and-such a way–how can you be a child of God?" At another time, he will say, "You are selfrighteous, therefore you cannot be

an heir of Heaven." Then, again, he will begin to rake up all the old stories that we have long forgotten of all our past unbelief, our past wandering, and so forth, and throw these in our teeth. He will say, "What? You, YOU a Christian? A pretty Christian you must be!" Or, possibly he will begin to tempt you after some suchsort as this–"The other day you would not do such-and-such a thing in business–how much you lost by it! So-and-so is a Christian, but he did it. Your neighbor, across the street, is he not a deacon of a church, and did not he do it? Why may not you do the same? You would get on a great deal better if you would do it. So-and-so does it and he gets on, and is just as much respected as you are! Then why should you not act in the same way?" Thus the devil will attack you with weapons taken from your own experience, or from the church of which you are a member. Ah, be careful, for Satan knows how to choose his weapons! He is not coming out against you, if you are great giants, with a sling and a stone, but he comes armed to the teeth to cut you down. If he knows that you are so guarded by a coat of mail that the edge of his sword shall be turned by your armor, then he will attack you with deadly poison! And if he knows that you cannot be destroyed by that means, seeing that you have an antidote at hand, then he will seek to take you in a trap. And if you are wary, so that you cannot be overtaken, thus, then he will send fiery troubles upon you, or a crushing avalanche of woe so that he may subdue you. The weapons of his warfare,

always evil–and often spiritual and unseen–are mighty against such weak creatures as we.

Again, the craftiness of the devil is discovered in another thing–in the agents he employs. The devil does not do allhis dirty work himself. He often employs others to do it for him. When Samson had to be overcome, and his Nazarite locks to be shorn away, Satan had a Delilah ready to tempt and lead him astray–he knew what was in Samson's heart, and where his weakness was and, therefore, he tempted him by means of the woman whom he loved. An old Divine says, "There's many a man that has had his head broken by his own rib"–and that is certainly true. Satan has sometimes set a man's own wife to cast him down to destruction, or he has used some dear friend as the instrument to work his ruin. Remember how David lamented over this evil–"For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was you, a man my equal, my guide, and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company."

"Ah," says the devil, "you did not think I was going to set an enemy to speak evil of you, did you? Why, that would not hurt you! I know better than that how to choose my agents–I shall choose a man who is a friend or an acquaintance–he will come close to you and then stab you under the folds of your garments." If a minister is

to be annoyed, Satan will choose a deacon to annoy him. He knows that he will not care so much about an attack from any other member of the church, so some deacon will lift himself up and domineer over him so that he shall have sleepless nights and anxious days. If it is a deacon that Satan wants to annoy, he will seek to set some member or brother-deacon against him–and if there is no other person that he cares for, it shall be his nearest and dearest friend who shall do the dastardly deed.

The devil is always ready to take in his hand the net into which the fish is most likely to go and to spread the snare which is the most likely to catch the bird. I do not suspect, if you are a professor of long standing, that you will be tempted by a drunk. No, the devil will tempt you by a canting hypocrite. I do not imagine your enemy will come and attack and slander you–it will be your friend. Satan knows how to use and to disguise all his agents. "Ah," he says, "a wolf in sheep's clothing will be better for me than a wolf that looks like a wolf! And one in the church will play my game better and accomplish it more readily than one out of it." The choice of Satan's agents proves his craft and cleverness. It was a cunning thing that he should choose the serpent for the purpose of tempting Eve. Very likely Eve was fascinated by the appearance of the serpent. She probably admired its glossy hue, and we are led to believe that it was a far more noble creature, then, than it is now. Perhaps, then, it could erect itself upon its coils and she was very

likely pleased and delighted with it. It may have been the familiar creature with which she played–I doubt not it was before the devil entered into it. You know how, often, the devil enters into each one of us. I know he has entered into me, many a time, when he has wanted a sharp word to be said against somebody. “Nobody can hurt that man, or grieve that man,” says the devil, “as well as Mr. Spurgeon can! Why, he loves him as his own soul. That’s the man,” says the devil, “to give the unkindest cut of all and he shall give it.” Then I am led, perhaps, to believe some wrong thing against some precious child of God, and afterwards to speak of it. And then I grieve to think that I should have been so foolish as to lend my heart and tongue to the devil! I can therefore warn each of you and especially myself, and all those who have much love bestowed upon them, to take heed lest they become instruments of Satan in grieving the hearts of God’s people, and casting down those who have trouble enough to cast them down, without having any from us!

And once again, Satan shows his cunning by the times in which he attacks us. I thought, when I lay sick, that if Icould but get up from my bed, and be made strong, I would give the devil a most terrible thrashing because of the way he set upon me when I was sick. Coward! Why did he not wait till I was well? But I always find that if my spirits sink and I am in a low condition of heart, Satan specially chooses that time to attack me with unbelief. Let

him come upon us when the promise of God is fresh in our memory, and when we aye enjoying a time of sweet outpouring of heart in prayer before God, and he will see how we will fight against him! But, no, he knows that, then, we would have the strength to resist him and, prevailing with God, we would be able to prevail over him, also. He will therefore come upon us when there is a cloud between ourselves and our God–when the body is depressed, and the spirits are weak–then he will tempt us and try to lead us to distrust God. At another time, he will tempt us to pride. Why does he not tempt us to pride when we are sick and depressed in spirit? "No," he says, "I cannot manage it then." He chooses the time when a man is well, when he is in full enjoyment of the promises, and enabled to serve his God with delight–then he will tempt him to pride. It is the timing of his attacks, the right ordering of his assaults, that makes Satan ten times more terrible an enemy than he would be otherwise–and that proves the depth of his craftiness. Verily, the old serpent is more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God has made.

There is one thing about the powers of Hell that has always amazed me. The Church of Christ is always quarrelling–but did you ever hear that the devil and his confederates quarrel? There is a vast host of those fallen spirits, but how marvelously unanimous they always are! They are so united that if at any special moment the great black prince of Hell wishes to concentrate all the masses

of his army at one particular point, it is done to the tick of the clock, and the temptation comes with its fullest force just when he sees it to be the most likely that he will prevail. Ah, if we had such unanimity as that in the Church of God, if we all moved at the guidance of the finger of Christ, if all the Church could, at this time, for instance, move in one great mass to the attack a certain evil, now that the time has come for the attack upon it, how much more easily might we prevail! But, alas, Satan exceeds us in subtlety, and the powers of Hell far exceed us in unanimity. This, however, is a great point in Satan's subtlety–that he chooses the times of his attacks so wisely.

And yet once more, and I will have done with this point. Satan's subtlety in another thing is very great, that is, in hiswithdrawing. When I first joined the Christian Church, I never could make out a saying which I heard from an old man, that there was no temptation so bad as not being tempted–nor did I understand, then, what Rutherford meant when he said he liked a roaring devil a great deal better than a sleeping devil. I understand it now! And you who are God's children and who have been for some years in His ways, understand it also–

"More the treacherous calm I dread

Than tempests rolling over my head."

There is such a state of heart as this–you want to feel, but you do not feel. If you could but doubt, you would think it a very great

attainment. Yes, and even if you could know the blackness of despair, you would rather feel that than be as you are. "There," you say, "I have no doubts about my eternal condition! I think I can say, though I could not exactly speak with assurance, for I fear it would be presumption, yet I do trust I can say that I am an heir of Heaven. Yet that does not give me any joy. I can go about God's work and feel that I love it, yet I cannot feel it is God's work. I seem to have got into a round of duty, till I go on, on, on, like a blind horse that goes because it must go. I read the promise, but I see no particular sweetness in it–in fact, it does not seem as if I needed any promise. And even threats do not frighten me–there is no terror in them to me. I hear God's Word. I am perhaps stirred by what the minister says, but I do not feel impressed by his earnestness as I should. I feel that I could not live without prayer, and yet there is no unction in my soul. I dare not sin. I trust my life is outwardly blameless, still, what I have to mourn over is a lead heart, a lack of susceptibility to spiritual delight or spiritual song, a dead calm in my soul like that dreadful calm of which Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner' said–

"'The very deep did rot,
Alas, that ever this should be!
Yes, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.'"

Now, dear Friend, do you know anything about your own state of heart just now? If so, that is the answer to the enigma, that not being tempted is worse than being tempted! Really, there have been times, in the past experience of my own soul, when I would have been obliged to the devil if he had come and stirred me up. I would have felt that God had employed him, against his wish, to do me lasting good, to wake me up to conflict. If the devil would but go into the Enchanted Ground and attack the pilgrims there, what a fine thing it would be for them! But, you will notice, John Bunyan did not put him there, for there was no business for him there. It was in the Valley of Humiliation that there was plentyof work cut out for Satan–but in the Enchanted Ground the pilgrims were all slumbering, like men asleep on the top of the mast. They were drunk with wine so that they could do nothing and, therefore, the devil knew he was not needed there–he just left them to sleep on! Madame Bubble and drowsiness would do all his work. But it was into the Valley of Humiliation that he went–and there he had his stern struggle with poor Christian. Brothers and Sisters, if you are passing through the land that is enchanted with drowsiness, indifference and slumber, you will understand the craftiness of the devil in sometimes staying out of our way.

II. And now, in the second place, let us very briefly enquire, WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THIS ENEMY? You and I feel that we must enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but we cannot enter it while

we stand still. The City of Destruction is behind us and Death is pursuing us–we must press towards Heaven–but, in the way, there stands this "roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." What shall we do? He has great subtlety–how shall we overcome him? Shall we seek to be as subtle as he is? Ah, that would be an idle task! Indeed, it would be a sinful one. To seek to be crafty like the devilwould be as wicked as it would be futile! What shall we do, then? Shall we attack him with wisdom? Alas, our wisdom is but folly. "Vain man would be wise," but at his very best estate he is but like a wild ass's colt. What, then, shall we do?

The only way to repel Satan's subtlety is by acquiring true wisdom. Again I repeat it–man has none of that in himself. What then? Herein is true wisdom. If you would successfully wrestle with Satan, make the Holy Scriptures your daily resort. Out of this sacred magazine continually draw your armor and your ammunition. Lay hold upon the glorious Doctrines of God's Word–make them your daily meat and drink. So shall you be strong to resist the devil and you shall be joyful in discovering that he will flee from you. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way," and how shall a Christian guard himself against the enemy? "By taking heed thereto according to Your Word." Let us always fight Satan with an, "It is written"–for no weapon will ever tell upon the arch-enemy so well as Holy Scripture will! Attempt to fight Satan with the wooden sword of reason and he will easily overcome you!

But use this Jerusalem blade of God's Word, by which he has been wounded many a time, and you will speedily overcome him!

But, above all, if we would successfully resist Satan, we must look not merely to revealed wisdom, but to IncarnateWisdom. O Beloved, here must be the chief place of resort for every tempted soul! We must flee to Him "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." He must teach us, He must guide us, He must be our All-in-All. We must keep close to Him. The sheep are never so safe from the wolf as when they are near the Believer, walk according to His example! Live daily in His fellowship, Trust always in His blood and in this way shall you be more than a conqueror even over the subtlety and craft of Satan himself! It must be a joy to the Christian to know that in the long run, the craft of Satan shall all be disappointed and all his evil designs against the saints shall prove of no effect. Are you not looking forward, Beloved, to the day when all your temptations shall be over and when you shall be in Heaven? And will you not then look down upon this arch-fiend with holy laughter and derision? I believe that the saints, when they think of the attacks of Satan, shall "rejoice with unspeakable joy" and, besides that, shall feel a contempt in their own souls for all the craft of Hell when they see how it has been disappointed.

What has the devil been doing these thousands of years? Has he not been the unwilling servant of God and of His Church? He has

always been seeking to destroy the living tree, but when he has been trying to root it up, it has only been like a gardener digging with his spade and loosening the earth to help the roots to spread themselves more! And when he has been with his axe seeking to lop the Lord's trees, and to mar their beauty, what has he been, after all, but a pruning knife in the hand of God to take away the branches that do not bear any fruit, and to purge those that do bear some, that they may bring forth more fruit? Once upon a time, you know, the Church of Christ was like a little brook–just a tiny stream–and it was flowing along in a little narrow dell. Just a few saints were gathered together at Jerusalem and the devil thought to himself, "Now I'll get a great stone and stop this brook from running." So he goes and gets this great stone and he dashes it down into the middle of the brook, thinking, of course, he would stop it from running any longer. But, instead of doing so, he scattered the drops all over the world–and each drop became the mother of a fresh fountain! You know what that stone was–it was persecution and the saints were scattered by it–but then, "they that werescattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word," and so the Church was multiplied and the devil was defeated!

Satan, I tell you to your face, you are the greatest fool that ever breathed, and I will prove it to you in the day when you and I shall stand as enemies–sworn enemies, as we are this day–at the great bar of God! And so, Christian, may you say unto him whenever he

attacks you! Hear him not, but resist him steadfast in the faith and you shall prevail.

Ge 3:8 • How God Comes to Man

SERMON 2900

H*ow God Comes To Man*

"And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the Presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where are you?"

Genesis 3:8, 9

"How will God come to us now that we have rebelled against Him?" That is a question which must have greatly perplexed our first parents. They may have said to one another, "Perhaps God will not come to us at all and then we shall be orphans, indeed. If spared to live on, we must continue to live without God and without hope

in the world." It would have been the worst thing that could have happened to our race if God had left this planet to take its own course and had said, concerning the people upon it, "I will leave them to their own way, for they are given over to idols."

But if He came to our first parents, in what way would He come? Surely Adam and Eve must have feared that He would be accompanied by the angels of vengeance to destroy them straight away, or, at any rate, to bind them in chains and fetters forever. So they questioned among themselves, "Will He come and if He does, will His coming involve the total destruction of the human race?" Their hearts must have been sorely perplexed within them while they were waiting to see what God would do to them as a punishment for the great sin they had committed. I believe they thought that He would come to them. From their past experience they knew so much of His graciousness that they felt sure that He would come. Yet they also understood so much of His holy anger against sin that they must have been afraid of His coming–so they went and hid themselves among the trees of the garden although every tree must have upbraided them for their disobedience, for everyone of the trees would seem to say, "Why do you come here? You have eaten of the fruit of the tree of which you were forbidden to partake. You have broken your Maker's command and His sentence of death has already gone out against you. When He comes, He will certainly come to deal with you in judgment

according to His faithful word–and when He does, what will become of you?" Every leaf, as it rustled, must have startled and alarmed them. The breath of the evening breeze, as it passed through the garden, must have filled them with fear and dread as to the doom awaiting them.

Now, "in the cool of the day," or, as the Hebrew has it, "in the wind of the evening," when the evening breeze was blowing through the garden, God came. It is difficult for us to even imagine how He revealed Himself to our first parents. I suppose He condescended to take upon Himself some visible form. It was "the voice of the Lord God" they heard in the garden and you know that it is the Word of God who has been pleased to make Himself visible to us in human flesh. He may have assumed some form in which they could see Him, otherwise, as a pure Spirit, God could not have been recognized either by their ears or their eyes.

They heard His voice speaking as He walked in the garden in the cool of the day. And when He called to Adam, albeit that there was righteous anger in the tone of His voice, yet His words were very calm and dignified and, as far as they could be, even tender, for, while you may read the words thus, "Adam, where are you?" You may also read them thus, "Where are you, poor Adam, where are you?" You may put a tone of pity into the words and yet not misread them. So the Lord comes thus in gentleness in the cool of the day and calls them to account. He patiently listens to their

wicked excuses and then pronounces upon them a sentence, which, heavy though it is towards the serpent and heavy though it is towards all who are not saved by the woman's wondrous Seed, yet has much mercy mingled with it in the promise that the Seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent–a promise which must have shone in their sad and sinful souls as some bright particular star shines in the darkness of the night!

I learn from this incident that God will come to sinful men, sooner or later, and we may also learn from the way in which He came to our first parents, how He is likely to come to us. His coming will be different to different men, but we gather, from this incident, that God will certainly come to guilty men even if He waits till the cool of the day. And we are also able to understand a little about the way in which He will ultimately come to all men.

Remember this, Sinner, however far you may get away from God, you will have to come close to Him one of these days! You may go and pluck the fruit that He forbids you to touch and then you may go and hide yourself among the thick trees in the forest and think that you have concealed yourself–but you will have to come face to face with your Maker at some time or other! It may not be today, or tomorrow. It may not be until "the cool of the day" of time. No, it may not be till time, itself, shall be no more–but, at last, you will have to confront your Maker! Like the comet that flies far off from the sun, wandering into space for an altogether inconceivable

distance and yet has to come back again, however long the time its circuit takes–so you will have to come back to God, either willingly, repentantly, believingly, or else unwillingly and in chains to receive your sentence of doom from the lips of the Almighty whom you have provoked to anger by your sin! God and you have to meet as surely as you are now living–at some time or other, each one of you must hear the voice of the Lord God saying to you, as He said to Adam, "Where are you?"

Now, from this meeting between God and fallen man, I learn a few lessons which I will pass on to you as the Holy Spirit shall enable me.

The first is this. When God did meet with fallen man, it was not until the cool of the day. This suggests to me GOD'S GREAT PATIENCE WITH THE GUILTY.

Whether Adam and Eve sinned in the early morning, or in the middle of the day, or toward evening, we do not know. It is not necessary that we should know this, but it is probable that the Lord God allowed an interval to intervene between the sin and the sentence. He was not in a hurry to come because He could not come except in anger to bring their sins home to them. You know how quick the tempers of some men are. If they are provoked, it is a word and a blow with them, for they have no patience. It is our littleness that makes us impatient. God is so great that He can endure far more than we can. And though our first parents' sin

greatly provoked Him–and it is to His Glory that He is so holy that He cannot look upon iniquity without indignation–yet He seemed to say to Himself, "I must go and call these two creatures of Mine to account for their sin. Yet judgment is My strange work–it is mercy in which I delight. This morning I drew back the curtains that had shielded them during the night and poured the sunlight in upon them, not a second beyond the appointed time, and I was glad to do it. And all day long I have been showering mercies upon them and the refreshing night-dews are already beginning to fall upon them. I will not go down to them till the latest possible moment. I will put it off till the cool of the day." God will do nothing in the heat of passion–everything shall be deliberate, calm, majestic and Divine!

The fact that God did not come to question His sinful creatures till the cool of the day ought to teach us the greatness of His patience and it should also teach us to be patient with others. How wondrously patient God has been with some of you who are here! You have lived many years and enjoyed His mercies, yet you have scarcely thought about Him. Certainly, you have not yielded your hearts to Him. But He has not yet come to deal with you in judgment. He has waited 20 years for you young people–30 years, 40 years, for you middle-aged folk–50 years, 60 years for you who are getting past that period and perhaps 70 years, or even 80 years He has been known to tarry for, "He delights in mercy," but He

does not delight in judgment! Seventy years form a long life, yet many persons spend all that time in perpetrating fresh sin. Called to repentance over and over again, they only become the more impenitent through resisting the call of mercy. Favored with blessings as many as the sands of the seashore, they only prove themselves the more ungrateful by failing to appreciate all those blessings.

It is amazing that God is willing to wait till the cool of such a long, long day of life as 70 or 80 years make up! How patient, then, we ought to be with one another! Yet are you, parents, always patient with your children–your young children who may not have willingly or consciously offended you? What patience you ought always to exercise towards them! And have you a like patience towards a friend or a brother who may use rough speech and provoke you? Yet such your patience ought to be. Never should we take our brother by the throat and say to him, "Pay me what you owe," so long as we find God deliberately waiting till the cool of the day before He comes to those who have offended Him–and even then uttering no more words of anger than should be uttered and mingling even those words with mercy that has no boundaries!

II. The second thing that I gather from the Lord's coming to Adam and Eve in the cool of the day is HIS DIVINE CARE FOR THE GUILTY.

Though He did not come till the cool of the day, thus manifesting His patience, He did come then, thus manifesting His care for those who had sinned against Him. He might have left them all night long–all night long without their God–all night long without Him after they had done just what He had forbidden them to do. All night long–a sleepless night, a fearful night, a night that would have been haunted with a thousand fears–all night long with this great battle trembling in the balance, with the great question of their punishment unsolved and an indefinable dread of the future hanging over them! Many of you know that the trial of being kept in suspense is almost worse than any other trouble in the world. If a man knew that he had to be beheaded, it would be easier for him to die at once than to have to kneel with his neck on the block and the gleaming axe lifted up above him, not knowing when it might fall. Suspense is worse than death! We seem to feel a thousand deaths while we are kept in suspense of one. So God would not leave Adam and Eve in suspense through the whole night after they had sinned against Him, but He came to them in the cool of the day.

There was this further reason why He came to them–notwithstanding the fact that they had disobeyed Him and that He would have to punish them, He remembered that they were still His creatures. He seemed to be saying within Himself, “What shall I do to them? I must not utterly destroy them, but how can I save them? I must carry out My threat, for My word is true, yet I must also see

how I can spare them, for I am gracious and My Glory is to be increased by the display of My Grace towards them." The Lord looked upon them as the appointed progenitors of His elect and regarded Adam and Eve, also, let us hope, as His elect whom He loved notwithstanding their sin So He seemed to say, "I will not leave them all night without the promise which will brighten their gloom." It was only one promise and, perhaps, it was not clearly understood by them–still, it was a promise of God, even though it was spoken to the serpent–"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed. He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." So, not one night were God's poor fallen creatures left without at least one star to gleam in the darkness for them and thus He showed His care for them.

And still, dear Friends, though God is slow to anger, yet He is always ready to pardon and very tender and compassionate even when He has to pass sentence upon the guilty. "He will not always chide; neither will He keep His anger forever." You can see His care and consideration even for the most unworthy of us because He has not cut us off in our sin! We are–

"Not in torment, not in Hell."

We can see the marks of His goodness in the very garments on our backs and the food of which we partake by His bounty. Many of His gifts come not merely to those who do not deserve them, but

to those who deserve to be filled with the gall and wormwood of Almighty Wrath!

III. Now, thirdly, I want to show you that WHEN THE LORD DID COME, HE AFFORDED US A PATTERN OF HOW THE SPIRIT OF GOD COMES TO AWAKEN THE CONSCIENCES OF MEN.

I have already said that sooner or later God will come to confront each one of us. I pray that if He has never come to you, dear Friend, in the way of awakening your conscience and making you feel yourself a sinner, He may come to you very speedily. And when He does come to awaken you–it is somewhat in this way.

First, He comes seasonably–"in the cool of the day." Adam's work was done and Eve had no more to do until thenext day. At that hour they had been accustomed, in happier times, to sit down and rest. Now God comes to them and the Spirit of God, when He comes to awaken men, generally visits them when they have a little time for quiet thought. You dropped in and heard a sermon–the most of it slipped from your memory, but there were some few words that struck you so that you could not get rid of them. Perhaps, though, you thought no more about the message to which you had listened. Something else came in and took your attention. But a little while later you had to watch all night by the bedside of a sick friend–and then God came to you and brought to your remembrance the words that you had forgotten. Or it may be that

some texts of Scripture which you learned when you were a child began to speak to you throughout the watches of the night. Or perhaps you were going along a country road or, it may be that you were out at sea on a dark night and the billows rolled heavily so that you could not sleep–and you even feared that you would be swallowed up by the raging sea–then–then came the Voice of the Lord God speaking personally to you! When other voices weresilenced, there was an opportunity for His voice to be heard!

Not only did the Lord come to Adam and Eve seasonably, but He spoke to Adam personally and said, “Where areyou?” One of the great mistakes in connection with all preaching is that so many hearers will persist in lending other people their ears. They hear a faithful Gospel sermon and they say, “That message would fit neighbor So-and-So admirably! What a pity Mrs. So-and-So did not hear it! That would have been the very word for her.” Yes, but when God comes to

you, as He came to Adam and Eve–and if you are not converted I pray that He may–the sermon He will deliver to you will be, every word of it, for you! He will say, “Adam,” or, “John,” or, “Mary,” or whatever your name is, “where are

you?“ The question will be addressed to you, alone! It will have no relation to any of your neighbors, but to you, alone. The question may take some such form as this–"Where are you? What have you been doing? What is your condition now? Will you now

repent, or will you still go on in your sins?" Have not you, young man, had some such experience as this? You went to the theater, but when you came home you said that you had not enjoyed it and that you wished you had not gone. You went to bed, but you could not sleep. It seemed as if God had come to wrestle with you and to reason with you about your past life, bringing up one thing after another in which you have sinned against Him. At all events, this is the way He deals with many–and if He deals thus with you, be thankful for it and yield yourself up to Him–do not struggle against Him!

I am always glad when men cannot be happy in the world, for, as long as they can be, they will be. It is always a great mercy when they begin to be sick of the dainties of Egypt, for then we may lead them, by God's guidance, to seek after the milk and honey of the land of Canaan–but not till then. It is a great blessing when the Lord puts before you, personally, a true view of your own condition in His sight–and makes you look at it earnestly, concentrating your whole thought upon it–so that you cannot even begin to think about others because you are compelled to examine yourself, to see what your real condition is in relation to God!

When the Lord thus comes to men and speaks personally with them, He makes them realize their lost condition. Doyou not see that this is implied in the question, "Where are you?" Adam was lost–lost to God, lost to holiness, lost to happiness. God, Himself,

says, “Where are you?"That was to let Adam know this, "I have lost you, Adam. At one time I could speak with you as with a friend, but I cannot do so any longer. You were once My obedient child, but you are not so now. I have lost you. Where are you?” May God the Holy Spirit convince every unconverted person here that he or she is lost–not only lost to themselves, to Heaven, to holiness and to happiness–but lost to God! It was God’s lost ones of whom Christ so often spoke. He was, Himself, the Good Shepherd who called together His friends and neighbors, saying to them, “Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost.” And He represents His Father saying of His son when He has come back to Him, “‘This, My son was dead’–dead to Me–‘and is alive again. He was lost’–lost to Me, ‘and is found.’” The value of a soul to God and God’s sense of loss in the case of each individual soul is something worth thinking over and worth calculating, if it can be calculated. God makes man realize that he is lost by His own moans and pleas, even as He said to Adam, “Where are you?”

You will observe, too, that the Lord not only came to Adam and questioned him personally, but He also made Adamanswer Him. And if the Lord has, in this way, laid hold of any of you, talking with you in the cool of the day and questioning you about your lost condition, He will make you confess your sin and bring you to acknowledge that it was really your own. He will not leave you as Adam wanted to be left–namely, laying the blame for the

disobedience upon Eve. And He will not leave you as Eve tried to be left–namely, passing the blame on to the devil! Before the Lord has done with you, He will bring you to the point that you shall feel, confess and acknowledge that you are really guilty of your own sin and that you must be punished for it. When He brings you down to that point and you have nothing at all to say for yourself, then He will pardon you!

I remember well when the Lord brought me to my knees in this way and emptied out all my self-righteousness and self-trust until I felt that the hottest place in Hell was my due desert–and that if He saved everybody else, but did not save me–yet He would still be just and righteous, for I had no right to be saved! Then, when I was obliged to feel that it must be all of Grace, or else there could be no salvation for me–then He spoke tenderly and kindly to me. But at first, there did not seem to be any tenderness or pity to my soul. There was the Lord coming to me, laying bare my sin, revealing to me my lost condition and making me shiver and tremble while I feared that the next thing He would say to me would be, "Depart from Me, accursed one, into everlasting fire in Hell!" Instead, He said to me in tones of wondrous love and graciousness, "I have put you among My children. 'I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.'" Blessed be the name of the Lord, forever and ever, for such amazing treatment as this meted out to the guilty and the lost!

IV. Now, fourthly, and very solemnly, I want to show you that THIS COMING OF THE LORD TO ADAM AND EVE IS ALSO PROPHETICAL OF THE WAY IN WHICH HE WILL COME AS A JUDGING SPIRIT TO THOSE WHO REJECT HIM AS AN AWAKENING SPIRIT.

I have already reminded you unconverted ones that as surely as you live, you will have to come to close terms with God like the rest of us. Sooner or later you will have to know Him–and to know that He knows you. There will be no way of escaping from an interview which will be most serious and most terrible for you. It will happen "in the cool of the day." I do not know when that may be. On my way to this service I called to see a young lady to whom, "the cool of the day" has come at twenty-five, or thirty years of age. Consumption has made her life a comparatively short one, but, blessed be God, His Grace has made it a very happy one and she is not afraid, "in the cool of the day," to hear the voice of the Lord God calling her Home! It is well that she is not afraid, but you who have not believed in Jesus will have to hear that same Divine Voice in the cool of your life's day! You may be spared to grow old–the strength of youth and of manhood will have gone and you will begin to lean on your staff and to feel that you have not the vigor you used to have–and that you cannot do such a hard day's work as you used to do and you must not attempt to run up the hills as you once did. That will be "the cool of the day" to you–and then the

Lord God will come in to you and say, “Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live.”

Sometimes that cool of the day comes to a man just when he would have liked it to be the heat of the day. He is making money and his children are multiplying around him, so he wants to stay in this world a little longer. But that cannot be–he must go up to his bed and he must lie there for so many days and nights–and then he must hear the voice of the Lord God as He begins to question him and say, “Where are you in relation to Me? Have you loved Me with all your heart, and mind, and soul, and strength? Have you served Me? Are you reconciled to Me through the death of My Son?” Such questions as these will come to us as surely as God made us! And we shall have to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or whether they have been evil. I pray you to think of these things and not to say, “Ah, that will not happen just yet.” That is more than any of us can tell–and let me remind you that life is very short even at the longest. I am especially appealing to those who are of my own age. Do not you, dear Friends, find that when you are between 40 and 50 years of age the weeks seem to be much shorter than they used to be when you were young? I therefore gather that when our friends are 70 or 80 years of age–time must seem far shorter to them than it ever was before! I think that one reason why Jacob, when he was a 130 years old, said to Pharaoh, “Few and evil have been the days of the years

of my life," was simply this–that he was really such an old man, though not as old as his ancestors, that time seemed even shorter to him than it did to younger men. If that was so, then I suppose that the longer a man lives, the shorter time would appear to be. But, short or long, your share of it will soon be over and you will be called upon to gather up your feet in bed and meet your fathers' God.

When that solemn and decisive hour comes, your interview with God will have to be a personal one. Sponsors will be of no use to anyone upon a dying bed! It will be of no use, then, to call upon Christian friends to take a share of your burden. They will not be able to give you of their oil, for they have not enough Divine Grace for themselves and you. If you live and die without accepting the aid of the one Mediator between God and man, all these questions will have to be settled between your soul and God without anyone else coming between yourself and your Maker! And all this may happen at any moment. This personal talk between God and your soul at the end of your life may be ordained to take place this very night–and I am sent, as a forerunner, to give you this warning so that you may not meet your God altogether by surprise, but may, at any rate, be invited and exhorted to be prepared for that great interview!

Whenever that interview takes place, God will deal with you in solemn earnestness–personally bringing home your sin to you. You

will be unable to deny it, for there will be One present at that interview who has seen it all–and the enquiries which He will make about the state of your soul will be very searching ones. He will not merely ask about one sin, but about all life–nor yet merely enquire about your doings, but about your sayings, your willings and your thinking–and about your whole position in relation to Himself, even as He asked Adam, "Where are you?"

In imagination–I pray that it may be only in imagination–I see some of you die unsaved. And I see you as you pass into the next world unpardoned and your soul realizes, for the first time, what was the experience of the rich man, of whom our Savior said, "In Hell he lifted up his eyes"–as though he had been asleep and had only just awakened to his true condition! "He lifted up his eyes" and gazed all around, but he could see nothing except that which caused him dismay and horror! There was no trace of joy or hope, no trace of ease or peace. Then, through the awful gloom, there came the sound of such questions as these, "Where are you, Sinner? You were in a House of Prayer a few weeks ago and the preacher urged you to seek the Lord, but you procrastinated! Where are you now? You said that there was no such place as Hell, but what do you say about it now? Where are you? You despised Heaven and refused Christ–where are you now?" What horror will seize the disembodied spirit as it reflects that it has brought itself into the condition of which it was warned–and from which it was

invited to escape–but which it willfully chose for itself, thus committing eternal suicide! The Lord in mercy preserve all of you from doing that! But if you will do it, then shall come forth from the lipsof the justly offended God the irrevocable sentence, “Depart from Me, you cursed.”

One of the most dreadful things in connection with this meeting of God with Adam was that Adam had to answer the Lord’s questions. The Lord said to Him, “Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?” In our courts of law we do not require men to answer questions which would incriminate them, but God does. And at the Last Great Day the ungodly will be condemned on their own confession of guilt! While they are in this world they put on a bronze face and declare that they have done no wrong to anybody–not even to God. They say they pay their way and they are as good as their neighbors–better than the most of them! But all their brag and bravado will be gone at the Day of Judgment and they will either stand speechless before God–and by their speechlessness acknowledge their guiltiness in His sight–or if they do speak, their vain excuses and apologies will but convict them! They will, out of their own mouths, condemn themselves like that wicked and slothful servant who was cast into the outer darkness where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth! God grant that we may never know, from sad personal experience, what that expression means!

Now, lastly, this meeting of God with Adam should lead us who believe in Christ to EXPECT TO MEET HIM ON THE MOST LOVING TERMS, for if even when He came to question guilty Adam and to pass sentence upon him, He did it so gently and mingled with the thunder of His wrath the soft shower of His Grace when He gave the promise that "the Seed of the woman" should bruise the serpent's head, may we not expect Him to meet us, by-and-by, on the most loving terms if we are in that woman's Seed and have been saved by Jesus Christ, His Son?

He will come in the evening, Brothers and Sisters, when the day's work is done, so do not fret about the burden and heat of the day. The longest and hottest day will come to an end–you will not live here forever. You will not always have to wear your fingers to the bone in trying to earn a scanty livelihood! You will not always have to look round upon your children and wonder where the bread will be found with which to feed them! No, the days on earth cannot last forever and, with many of you the sun has already climbed the hill and begun to go down the other side–"the cool of the day" will soon come! I can look upon a good many of you who have already reached that period. You have retired from active service, you have shaken off a good deal of business care and now you are waiting for your Master to come to you. Rest assured that He will not forget you, for He has promised to come to you. You will hear His voice before long, telling you that He is walking in the garden and

coming to you. Good old Rowland Hill, when he found himself getting very feeble, said, “I hope they have not forgotten poor old Rowley up there.” But he knew that he was not forgotten! Nor will you be, Beloved.

You will hear your Lord’s voice before long and the mercy is that you will know it when you do hear it! Have you not often heard it before now? Many a time, in this house, you have heard His voice and you have been glad. In the cool of many an evening you have sat still and communed with God. I like to see an old Christian woman with her big Bible open, sitting by the hour together and tracing with her finger the precious Words of the Lord–eating them, digesting them, living on them and finding them sweeter to her soul than honey or the droppings of the honeycomb to her taste! Well, then, as you have heard your Lord’s voice and know its tones so well. As you have been so long accustomed to hear it, you will not be astonished when you hear it in those last moments of your life’s day! You will not run to hide yourself as Adam and Eve did! You are covered with the robe of Christ’s righteousness, so you have no nakedness to fear and you may respond, “Did You ask, my Lord, ‘Where are you?’ I answer, ‘Here I am, for You did call me.’ Did You ask where I am? I am hidden in Your Son! I am ‘accepted in the Beloved.’ Did You say, ‘Where are you?’ Here I stand, ready and waiting to be taken up by Him, according to His promise that where He is, there I shall be, also, that I may behold His Glory.”

Why, surely, Beloved, as this is the case, you may even long for the evening to come when you shall hear His voice and shall go up and away from this land of shadows and chilly nights, into that blest place where the Glory burns on forever and ever, the Lamb is the Light thereof and the days of your mourning shall be ended forever!

God grant that you may all have a part and a lot in that Glory, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

Ge 3:9 • God's First Words to the First Sinner

SERMON 0412

God's First Words To The First Sinner

"The Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, Where are you?"

Genesis 3:9

IT will be interesting to the members of this Church to know that it was under a sermon delivered by Mr. William Wallin from this very text that my honored and venerable predecessor, Dr. Gill, was converted to a knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus. I looked with some degree of curiosity to his interpretation of this passage. I had half hoped to find there some allusion to his own conversion, but I did not, although I was edified by his clear and methodical

comment upon it to which I am under obligations for suggesting the present discourse.

May I hope that, as this text has been the means in the hand of God of conferring upon the Church of Christ a man who valiantly defended the Truth of God and was the means of expounding the doctrine of grace with great clearness, that there may be here present today someone at least who like John Gill may hear the Word with power and may receive it in its quickening influence into his soul. No, let us pray that not one alone but that many may hear the enquiry of God as it rings through the multitude and while it reaches the ear may it reach the heart, too. And may some be brought before God in answer to the question, "Where are you?" and receive the assurance of pardon and go on their way in peace.

It is not necessary that I should, in expounding this text, enter at all into the circumstances which led to the enquiry. Man had sinned against God. Mark the alienation of heart which sin causes in the sinner. Adam ought to have sought out his Maker. He should have gone through the garden crying for his God, "My God, my God, I have sinned against You. Where are You? Low at Your feet Your creature falls and asks mercy at Your hands. My Father, You have placed me in this lovely Paradise. I have wickedly and willfully eaten of the fruit of which You said that I should not eat of it, since in the day I ate thereof I should surely die.

“Behold, my Father, I submit to the penalty. I confess Your justice and beseech Your mercy, if mercy can be shown to such an one as I am.” But instead thereof, Adam flees from God. The sinner comes not to God–God comes to him. It is not, “My God, where are You?” but the first cry is the voice of grace, “Sinner where are you?” God comes to man–man seeks not his God. Despite all the doctrines which proud free will has manufactured, there has never been found from Adam’s day until now a single instance in which the sinner first sought his God. God must first seek him. The sheep strays of itself but it never returns to its fold unless sought by the Great Shepherd.

It is human to err, it is Divine to repent. Man can commit iniquity but even to know that it is iniquity so as to feel the guilt of it is the gift of the grace of God. We have and are nothing but what is vile. Everything which is God-like, everything which aspires towards righteousness and true holiness comes from the Most High.

And while the text manifestly teaches us the alienation of the human heart from God, so that man shuns his Maker and does not desire fellowship with Him, it reveals also the folly which sin has caused. Sin made man a fool. He was once in God’s image, wise. Now, since the trail of the serpent has passed over his nature he has become an arrogant fool–for is not he a fool who would cover the nakedness of sin with fig leaves? Is not he indeed mad who would hide from the Omniscient Jehovah beneath the spreading boughs of

trees? Did not Adam know that God fills all space and dwells everywhere? That from the highest Heaven to the deepest Hell there is nothing that is hid from His understanding?

And yet so ignorant and stupid is he that he hopes to escape from God and make the trees of the garden a covert from the fiery eyes of Divine Wrath. Ah, how foolish we are! How we repeat the folly of our first parent every day when we seek to hide sin from conscience and then think it is hidden from God. Fools when we are more afraid of the gaze of man than of the searching of the Eternal One–when because the sin is secret and has not entrenched upon the laws and customs of society–we go to our beds with the black mark still upon us–being satisfied because man does not see it, that therefore God does not perceive it.

O sin, you have made man ask the question, "Where shall I flee from Your presence?" And you have made him forget that if he ascend to Heaven, God is there. If he makes his bed in Hell, God is there and if he says, "Surely the darkness shall cover me," even the night shall be light about him.

But now the Lord Himself comes forth to Adam and note how He comes. He comes walking. He was in no haste to smite the offender, not flying upon wings of wind, not hurrying with His fiery sword unsheathed–but walking in the garden. "In the cool of the day"–not in the dead of night when the natural glooms of darkness might have increased the terrors of the criminal. Not in

the heat of the day, lest he should imagine that God comes in the heat of passion. Not in the early morning, as if in haste to slay, but at the close of the day–for God is long-suffering, slow to anger and of great mercy.

In the cool of the evening, when the sun was setting up Eden's last day of glory, when the dews began to weep for man's misery, when the gentle winds with breath of mercy breathed upon the hot cheek of fear. When earth was silent that man might meditate and when Heaven was lighting her evening lamps that man might have hope in darkness–then and not till then–came forth the offended Father. Adam flees and seeks to avoid that very God whom he had once met with confidence and with whom he had the sweetest fellowship, talking with Him as a man talks with his friend. And now hear the voice of God as He cries, "Adam, where are you?"

Oh, there were two truths in that short sentence. It showed that Adam was lost, or God would not have needed to ask him where he was. Until we have lost a thing we need not inquire about it. But when God said, "Adam, where are you?" it was the voice of a shepherd enquiring for his lost sheep. Or better still, the cry of a loving parent asking for his child that has run away from him, "Where are you?" There are but three words, but they contain the dread doctrine of our lost estate. When God asks, "Where are you?" man must be lost. When God Himself inquires where he is,

he must be lost in a more awful sense than you and I have as yet fully known.

But then there was also mercy here, for it showed that God intended to have mercy upon man or else He would have let him remain lost and would not have said, “Where are you?” Men do not inquire for what they do not value. There was a Gospel sermon, I think, in those three Divine words as they penetrated the dense parts of the thicket and reached the tingling ears of the fugitives–“Where are you?” Your God is not willing to lose you. He is come forth to seek you, just as by-and-by He means to come forth in the Person of His Son, not only to seek but to save that which now is lost. “Where are you, Adam?”

Oh, had God meant to have destroyed the race, He would have hurled His thunderbolt at once and burned the trees and let the ashes of the sinner lie beneath His angry gaze. He would have rushed in the whirlwind and in the storm and tearing up the cedars and the pomegranates by their roots, He would have said, “Here you are, you rebel! Traitor, take your due deserts! Let Hell open before you and be you swallowed up forever.” But no, He loves man. He cares for him and therefore now inquires where he is in tones of calmness, “Adam, where are you, where are you?”

The question which the Lord asked of Adam may be used in five different ways. We are not sure in what precise sense the Lord intended it–perhaps in all–for there is always in the utterance of the

Divine One a great depth which couches beneath. Our words, if they give one sense, do well. But the Lord knows how to speak so that He shall teach many Truths in few words. We give little in much–God gives much in little. Many words and little sense–this is too often the rule of man's speech. Few words and much meaning–this is the rule with God.

We give gold beaten out into leaf–God gives ingots of gold when He speaks. We use but the filings of gems–God drops pearls from His lips each time He speaks to us. We, perhaps, even in eternity, know how Divine are God's words–how like Himself, how exceeding broad, how infinite.

We believe that the enquiry of God was intended in an AROUSING SENSE–"Adam, where are you?" Sin stultifies the conscience, it drugs the mind so that after sin man is not so capable of understanding his danger as he would have been without it. Sin is a poison which kills conscience painlessly by mortification. Men die by sin as men die when frozen to death upon the Alps–they die in a sleep. They sleep and sleep and sleep and sleep on, till death closes the scene and then in Hell they awake in torments.

One of the first works of grace in a man is to put aside this sleep, to startle him from his lethargy, to make him open his eyes and discover his danger. One of the first deeds of the Good Physician is to put sensibility into our flesh. It has become cold and dead and mortified. He puts life into it and then there is pain–but that very

pain has a salutary effect upon us. Now I think that this question from the Lord was intended to set Adam thinking. “Where are you?” He had perceived in some degree into what a state his sin had brought him but this question was meant to stir the depths of his spirit and wake him up to such a sense of danger, that he should labor to escape from the wrath to come.

“Adam, where are you?”–look at yourself now, naked, a stranger to your God, dreading the presence of your Maker, miserable, undone. “Adam, where are you?”–with a hard heart, with a rebellious will, fallen, fallen, fallen from your high estate. “Adam, where are you?” Lost! Lost to your God, lost to happiness, lost to peace, lost in time, lost in eternity. Sinner, “where are you?” O that I might, by the earnest words which I shall now utter, stir up some callous, careless sinner to answer the enquiry for himself! Man, where are you?–where are you this morning?

Shall I tell you? You are in a condition in which your very conscience condemns you. How many there are of you who have never repented of sin, have never believed in Christ! I ask you, is your conscience easy?–Is it always easy? Are there not some times when the thunder is heard? Are there not seasons when the watchman lights his candle and searches the secret parts of your soul and discovers your iniquity? Where are you, then?–For conscience is to God what the hook is to the fisherman.

Conscience, like God's hook, is in your jaws today and He has but to draw in the line and you are in the consuming fire. Though conscience makes you smart, Justice shall be far sterner with you than your poor imperfect conscience. If your heart condemns you, God is greater than your heart and knows all things. Your conscience tells you you are wrong–O how wrong, then, must you be!

But man, do you not know you are a stranger from your God? Many of you seldom think of Him. You can spend days and weeks without a mention of His name, except, perhaps, in some trivial language, as in an oath. You cannot live without a friend but you can live without your God. You eat, you drink, you are satisfied. The world is enough for you. Its transient pleasures satisfy your spirit. If you saw God here you would flee from Him. You are an enemy to Him. Oh, is this the right case for a creature to be in? Let the question come to you–"Where are you?" Must not that creature be in a very pitiable position who is afraid of his Creator?

You were made to glorify Him. You were made to rejoice in His presence and to delight in His goodness. But it seems you love not the very food which was meant to sustain you. You must be sick–you must be sick, indeed! "Where are you?" Remember, the Almighty God is angry with you. His Commandments, like so many guns are all pointed against you this morning. And it needs only the uplifted finger of the Divine One and they shall soon

destroy you and break you in pieces. Would a man be comfortable with his neck upon the block and the axe gleaming above his head?

It is your case today. You are in the position of the courtier at the feast of Dionysius, with the sword over your head suspended by a single hair. Condemned already!! “God is angry with the wicked every day.” “If he turn not, He will whet His sword: He has bent His bow and made it ready.” Where are you, man? O God, help the man to see where he is! Open his eyes. Let the question startle him. Let him start in his sleep a little–yes, let him wake and discover where he is–obnoxious to Your wrath and the object of Your hot displeasure!

“Where are you?” Your life is frail, nothing can be more weak. A spider’s line is cable compared with the thread of your life. Dreams are substantial masonry compared with the bubble structure of your being. You are here and you are gone. You sit here today–before another week is past you may be howling in another world. Oh, where are you, Man? Unpardoned and yet a dying man! Condemned, yet going carelessly towards destruction! Covered with sin, yet speeding to your Judge’s dread tribunal! Lost here, yet hurrying on, each moment bearing you on eagle’s wings to the place where you shall be lost eternally!

How hard it is to bring ourselves to know ourselves! In other matters if a man is a little sick he seeks his doctor and would know his position. But here a man says, “Peace, peace. Let well enough

alone." If we fear that our personal estates are at all in jeopardy we have anxious nights and toilsome days. But, oh, our souls–our poor, poor souls–we play with them as if they were worthless counters or bits of platter which a child might pick up in the streets and cast away!

Sinner! Sinner! Sinner! Is your soul so poor a bauble that you can afford to lose it, because you will not break your sleep and stop your pleasurable dreams? Oh, if a brother's heart can move your heart and if a brother's voice can wake your sleeping eyes, I would say, "What ails you, O Sleeper? Arise and call upon your God! Awake! Why do you sleep?! Awake to answer the question, 'Where are you?'–lost, ruined and undone! O sinner where are you?"

II. Now, secondly, the question was meant to CONVICTS OF SIN and so to lead to a confession. Had Adam's heart been in a right state he would have made a full confession of his sinfulness. "Where are you?" Let us hear the voice of God saying that to us if today we are out of God and out of Christ. "Where are you, Adam? I made you in My own image. I made you a little lower than the angels. I made you to have dominion over the works of My hands. I put all things under your feet–the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea and whatsoever passes through the depths of the sea. I gave this whole garden of delights to be your home.

"I honored you with My presence. I thought of your welfare. The moon did not hurt you by night. The sun did not smite you by day. I

tempered the winds for you. I clothed the trees with fruit for your nourishment. I made all things minister to your happiness. Where are you? I asked of you but that little thing that you would not touch one tree which I had reserved for Myself. Where are you? Are you in the room of a thief, a rebel, a traitor? Have you sinned? O Adam, where are you?"

And now, Sinner, hear me. "Where are you?" To many of you the Lord might say, "I gave you a godly mother who kept over you in your childhood. I gave you a holy father who longed for your conversion. I gave you the gifts of Providence–you never wanted for a meal. I clothed your back. I put you in a comfortable position in life. I raised you up from a bed of sickness. I overlooked ten thousand follies. My mercies like a river have flown to you. When you opened your eyes in the morning it was to look upon My goodness. And till the last moment of the night I was your helper and drew the curtains about your defenseless head.

"I have covered you with My feathers. Under My wings have you trusted and now where are you? Have you not forgotten My Commandments, abhorred My Person, broken My Laws, rejected My Son? Are you not at this day a disbeliever, content to trust to your own works but not to take the finished righteousness of My Beloved Son, the Savior of the world? What have you done for Him who has done so much for you? What are you? Have you not been a cumberground–a tree that sucks the soul but bears no fruit–

that drinks in the genial rain of Heaven but yields no grateful fruit? Where are you? Are you not today in the camp of My enemy? Are you not on Satan's side, defying Me and lifting up the puny arm of your rebellion against the Lord that made you and that keeps the breath in your nostrils–in whose hand your life is and whose are all your ways? Sinner, where are you? After all God's goodness–still a sinner!"

Read the question again thus, "Where are you?" The serpent said you should be a god. You thought to be made exceedingly glorious. Is it so, Adam? Is it so? Where is your boasted knowledge? Where the honors? Where the vast attainments that rebellion would bring to you? Instead of the clothing of angels you are naked. Instead of glory you have shame. Instead of preferment you have disgrace. Adam, where are you? And Sinner, where are you? Sin said to you, "I will give you pleasure"–you have had it. But what of the pain which followed the pleasure? Sin gave you its cup full of mixed wine. But what of the red eyes and of the woe? Sin said to you, "I will make you great," but what has it done for you?

Drunkard, what has it done for you? Given you rags and poverty. Adulterer, Fornicator–what has it done for you? Filled your flesh with leprosy and your soul with agony. Thief! Cheat! What has it done for you? Disgraced you and branded you before the eyes of men. Sinner in secret! Polite sinner! What has it done for you? Soured your sweets and poisoned all your joys. Where are you?

Where are you? In every case sin has been a curse. Without exception, rebellion, if it has not yet brought its due deserts will do so and sinners shall be filled with their own ways.

And then to add to the conviction, the Lord asks of Adam, "Where are you," as if He asked him, "How did you come there?" Adam, you came there of yourself. If you had been upright Eve had not cast you down. Eve 'twas not the serpent with whom the main guilt must lie. Had you not given ear, he might have tempted long if you had been deaf. And so today God says to the sinner, "Where are you?" You are where you have brought yourself. That you have sinned is your own fault and none else's but your own.

Oh, it is hard to make a sinner see that sin is his own property. It is the only thing we have. There is only one thing we created and that is sin and that is our own. If I permit anything that is evil, I must confess it is a child that has sprung from my own heart–it has its origin in myself. If we talk of the Fall men will throw their sin on father Adam. They speak of the depravity of nature and then they think they are to be excused, as if depravity of nature did not prove the man to be desperately bad–as if it were not saying that sin is essentially man's own thing–that he has it in his very bones and is his blood.

If we are sinners there is no excuse for us whatever. And if we live and die so, the guilt shall lie at our own door and nowhere else. "Adam, where are you?" You are where you have willfully put

yourself and you remain willfully in the same desperate state of rebellion against God and of alienation from Him. I would God that something would not only arouse the sinner this morning but work conviction in him. It is easier to make a man start in his sleep than to make him rise and burn the loathsome bed on which he slumbered–and this is what the sinner must do–and what he will do if God is at work in him.

He will wake up and find himself lost. Conviction will give him the consciousness that he has destroyed himself and then he will hate the sins he loved before. He will flee from his false refuges, forsake his joys and seek to find a lasting salvation where alone it can be found–in the blood of Christ.

III. This brings me to the third way in which we may regard the question of the text. The Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, "Where are you?" We may regard this text as the VOICE OF GOD BEMOANING MAN'S LOST ESTATE.

Some have even ventured to translate the Hebrew, "Alas for you, alas for you!" It is as if God uttered the words of the Prophet, "How can I give you up? How can I utterly destroy you? How can I set you as Admah, How shall I make you as Zeboim? My repentings are kindled, My heart is moved for you. Where are you, My poor Adam? You did talk with Me, but you have now fled from Me. You were happy once, what are you now? Naked and poor and miserable. You were once in My image glorious, immortal,

blessed–where are you now, poor Adam? My image is marred in you, your own Father's face is taken away and you have made yourself earthy, sensual, devilish. Where are you now, poor Adam?"

Oh, it is wonderful to think how the Lord felt for poor Adam. It is taken for granted by all theologians that God can neither feel nor suffer. There is no such thing in the Word of God. If it could be said that God could not do anything and everything–we should say that He was not Omnipotent. But He can do all things and we have not a God that cannot be moved–we have one who feels and who describes Himself in human language as having a father's heart and all the tenderness of a mother's heart. Just as a father cries over a rebellious son, so does the eternal Father say, "Poor Adam, where are you?"

And now have I here this morning any soul on whom the former part of the text has had some effect? Do you feel yourself to be lost and do you discern that this lostness is the result of your own willful folly? Do you bemoan yourself? Ah, then, God bemoans you. He is looking down upon you and He is saying, "Ah, poor drunkard, why will you cling to your cups? Into what misery have they brought you?" He is saying to you who are now weeping over sin, "Ah, poor child, what pain you suffer from your own willful folly!" A father's heart moves, He longs to clasp His Ephraim to His breast.

Do not think, Sinner, that God is stony-hearted. You have a heart of stone, God has not. Do not think that He is slow to move–you are slow to move–He is not–the hardness is in yourself. If you are straitened anywhere, it is in your own heart, not in Him. Soul, Soul convicted of sin! God loves you and to prove how He loves you, in the Person of His Son He creeps over you and He cries, "O that you had known, even you in this, your day, the things that make for your peace. But now are they hid from your eyes."

I hear Him saying to you, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not!" I pray you, let this mournful wailing voice of the Eternal God come to your ear and move you to repentance! "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies but had rather that he would turn unto Me and live." Oh, does your heart feel ready to burst because of your sin and the misery into which it has brought you? Pray, poor sinner, "I will arise and go unto my Father and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in Your sight and am no more worthy to be called Your son."

He sees you, Sinner. When you are yet a great way off, He sees you–ere are eyes of mercy! He runs–Here are feet of mercy! He clasps you–ere are arms of mercy! He kisses you–ere are lips of mercy! He says, "Take off his rags"–here are words of mercy! He clothes you–here are deeds of mercy! Wonders of mercy–all mercy!

O did you know what a reception a God of mercy gives to sinners? You would not stay away if you did!

As John Bunyan says, when the besieger hangs out the black flag, then those within the walls say they will fight it out. But when he runs up the white flag and tells them that if they will open the gates he will have mercy upon them, no, he will give a charter to their city, then says Bunyan, they say, "Fling open the gates," and they come tumbling over the walls to him in the readiness of their hearts. Soul, let not Satan deceive you by telling you that God is hard, unkind, unwilling to forgive! Try Him, try Him! Just as you are–black with sin, filthy, self-condemned and if you need anything to make you come to Him, hear again the Lord's plaintive cry, as it rings through the trees of Eden, "Adam, poor Adam, My own creature, where, where are you?"

IV. But now I must turn, lest time should fail us, to a fourth way in which no doubt this verse was intended. It is an arousing voice, a convincing voice, a bemoaning voice–but, in the fourth place–it is a SEEKING VOICE.

"Adam, where are you?" I am come to find you wherever you may be. I will look for you till the eyes of My pity see you. I will follow you till the hand of My mercy reaches you and I will still hold you till I bring you back to Myself and reconcile you to My heart.

Again–if you have been able to follow me through the three parts of the discourse, I can speak confidently to you. If you have been aroused, if you have been convicted, if you have some longings toward God, then the Lord has come forth to seek you and to seek you this morning. What a thought it is, that when God comes forth to seek His chosen He knows where they are and He never misses them. And though they may have wandered ever so far yet it is not too far for Him. If they had gone to the gates of Hell and the gates were half opened to receive them the Lord would get them even there.

If they had so sinned that they had given themselves up and every Christian living had given them up, too–if Satan had counted upon them and had made ready to receive them–yet when God comes forth to seek them He will find them and He will have them after all. You who are lost, perishing sinners, hear the voice of God, for it speaks to you, "Where are you?" for I am come to seek you. "Lord I am in such a place that I cannot do anything for myself." "Then I am come to seek you and do all for you." "Lord, I am in such a place that the Law threatens me and Justice frowns upon me." "I am come to answer the threats of the Law and to bear all the wrath of Justice."

"But, Lord, I am in such a place that I cannot repent as I would." "I am come to seek you and I am exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins." "But, Lord, I cannot believe in

You, I cannot believe as I would." "A bruised reed I will not break and a smoking flax will I not quench, I am come to give you faith." "But, Lord, I am in such a state that my prayers can never be acceptable." "I am come to pray for you and then to grant you your desires." "But, Lord, you do not know what a wretch I am." "Yes, I know you. Though I asked you the question, 'Where are you?' it was that you might know where you are, for I knew well enough."

"But, Lord, I have been the chief of sinners–none can have so aggravated their guilt as I have." "But wherever you may be I have come to save you." "But I am an outcast from society." "But I am come to gather together the outcasts of Israel." "Oh, but I have sinned beyond all hope." "Yes, but I have come to give hope to hopeless sinners." "Yes, but then I deserve to be lost." "Yes, but I have come to magnify the Law and make it honorable and so to give you your deserts in the Person of Christ and then to give you My mercy because of His merits."

There is not a sinner here conscious of his lost estate who can be in a position out of which he cannot be brought. I will conceive the worst of all the worst, the vilest of all the vile–we will bring up those who have taken high degrees in the devil's synagogue and become masters of iniquity. But still if with the tearful eye they look alone to the wounds of Him who shed His blood for sinners–He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.

Oh, I cannot preach this morning as I would, nor can you perhaps hear as you would wish, but may the Lord speak where I cannot and may He say unto some despairing sinner here, “Soul, your hour is come. I will pluck you out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay and this day and at this very hour, I will set your feet upon a Rock. I will put a new song into your mouth and I will establish your goings.” Blessed, blessed, be the name of the Most High if such may be the case.

And now, lastly, we feel sure that this text may be used and must be used, in another sense. To those who reject the text as a voice of arousing and conviction–to those who despise it as the voice of mercy bemoaning them–or as the voice of goodness seeking them–it comes in another way. It is the voice of JUSTICE SUMMONING THEM.

Adam had fled but God must have him come to His bar. “Where are you, Adam? Come here, Man, come here, I must judge you–sin cannot go unpunished. Come and your guilty spouse with you. Come here. I must put questions to you, I must hear your pleadings and since they will be vain and void I must pronounce your sentence.” For though there was much of pity in the question, there was something of severity, too. “Adam, Adam, where are you? Come here to be judged.”

Today you hear not that cry–it is mercifully postponed. You shall hear it soon. You shall hear it for the first time like mutterings of

thunder when the storm begins. You shall hear it when sickness casts you on your bed and death looks through his bony eyes upon you and touches you with his ghastly hand and says, “Prepare to meet your God.” You may put off the question today–you will have to deal with it when God Himself shall come into closer contact with your nature than He does today.

Then shall your bones be as a jelly and your ribs shall quake and your very heart shall melt like wax. You shall contend with the pains of sickness or disease–but there shall be a direr pain than these. You shall have to look on death–but death shall not be the most terrible of all your terrors–for you shall see behind death the judgment and the doom. Then you will hear it–when the room is silent–and voices of wife and child are hushed. When only the clock is ticking you shall hear the footfalls of God coming to you in the eventide of your life, saying to you, “Where are you? Now you shall meet Me. Gird up your loins! No more invitations of mercy for you! Your day of mercy is gone. No warnings from the minister again. Now you shall meet Me face to face.”

“Where are you?” Can you brag and boast now, when your nerves have become loads for the hot feet of pain to travel on and your strength has gone endued and you are as a candle ready to die out? Where now are your oaths? Where now your merry-makings and your jests? Where are you now? You may toss and turn. But you will not be able to escape the question. You will try to look back to

this life but you will be compelled to look forward to the life or the death to come. And still will the Lord whisper into your ears, “Where are you? Where are you?”

Then shall come the last struggle when the strong man shall be bowed. When the bright and glittering eye shall be covered over with film and the tongue shall cleave to the roof of the mouth and the hand shall lie strengthless on the bed–and the feet shall no more be able to support the body. When the pulse shall fail and the clammy death-sweat shall stand upon the brow and in those last moments there will still be heard that awful voice, rising with the gathering storm till it reaches the full grandeur of the awful tempest–“Where are you?”

In the Jordan without God, nearing the grave without hope. Dying, but no Christ to help you. Launching upon eternity, but no hope of eternal salvation. It is over and the last pang has passed and the thread is snapped that bound the spirit to the body and you are gone into another world. But the question follows you–“Where are you?” Your Spirit is now awake, it sleeps no more. It is rid of the dull flesh that kept it sullen, stolid, stupid, dead. Now it hears that voice indeed and it thrills through and through the spirit, for the soul is brought before its God. “Where are you? Where are you?” cries the quickened conscience. And God answers it, “Depart, you cursed one!”

The spirit departs from God, not to hide itself among the trees of the garden but to plunge itself into waves of agony. And how many years have passed and the body–though the soul has been alive and has suffered–has been sleeping in the grave and the worms have devoured it. But hark, the Day of Judgment, the day of thunder has arrived. Shrill above all thunders sounds the awful trumpet. After the trumpet comes the voice–"Awake, you dead and come to judgment!" Amidst that awful tumult is heard the cry, "Where are you?"

The angelic messenger has found your body and from the grave your body starts, from underneath the green sward. Up it leaps in answer to the question, "Where are you?" and to its horror its ghastly spirit comes back. Its soul, that long has suffered, returns into the resurrection body and they two, comrades in sin, are now comrades in judgment. The cry rings forth once more and that very ear shall hear it that now listens to me–"Where are you?"

Then comes the Great White Throne and those very eyes shall see it that now gaze on me. And then comes the commencement of the dread assize–and that heart shall quail then which moves not now. Then shall come your own personal trial. And oh, Sinner! Sinner! It is not for me to describe your terror. I could not give even the faintest picture of that death-sound and of the death of your immortal spirit while you hear it–"I was an hungered and you gave Me no meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; inasmuch as

you did it not unto one of the least of these My Brethren you did it not to Me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

Oh, earth! Earth! Earth! Hear the Word of the Lord! I pray each of you to hear it for yourselves. I have not talked to you of dreams. You know they are realities. And if you know it not now you shall before long. I do beseech you by the blood of Him that died for sinners–and what stronger argument can I use?–think of the question, "Where are you?" May God show you where you are. Hear the bemoaning voice of God, as pityingly He weeps over you. Seek His face for He seeks you. And then you need not dread to hear Him say at the last, "Where are you?" But you will be able to say, "Here am I and the children You have given me. We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And, Father, here we are, hoping to dwell in Your presence forever and ever."

Oh, that I could plead with you as a man pleads for his life! Would that these lips of clay were lips of fire and this tongue no more of flesh but a live coal taken with the tongs from off the altar! Oh, for words that would burn their way into your souls! O Sinner! Sinner! Why will you die? Why will you perish? Man, eternity is an awful thing and an angry God is a dreadful thing! And to be judged and condemned–what tongue can tell the horror?

Escape for your life! Look not behind you. Stay not in all the plain. Escape to mount Calvary, lest you be consumed. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Trust Him alone with your soul. Trust Him with it now, “and you shall be saved and your house.”

Ge 3:14 • The Serpent's Sentence

SERMON 2165

T*he Serpent's Sentence*

"And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because you have done this, you are cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field. Upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life: and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

Genesis 3:14, 15

SOME master in Israel who wanted to help the memories of his hearers has said that the three things to be preached above everything else are the three R's–Ruin, Redemption and Regeneration. He spoke wisely and well. How will men seek

salvation if they do not feel their ruin? Where is there salvation except in the atoning blood? What is salvation but being created anew unto holiness? It is a noteworthy fact that, in Holy Scripture there are three third chapters which deal with these things in the fullest manner. The third of Genesis reveals Ruin. The third of Romans teaches Redemption. The third of John sets forth Regeneration.

Will our young friends be so good as to read those chapters through with care, at home? It is also worthy of mention that not only do each of these chapters teach its own R, but that it also teaches the other two R's. In this third of Genesis we have not only Ruin, but we have the Redeemer in "the Seed of the woman," and we have Regeneration in the expression, "I will put enmity between you and the woman." God's regenerating power creates a hatred of evil in the chosen seed. The same you will find in the other chapters, for the third of Romans contains a fearful description of the sin and ruin of men. And in the third of John, after you have read, "You must be born again," not far from it you find it written, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have eternal life." Believe any of these great Truths of God and the rest follow as a necessary consequence.

May we be helped this morning to learn something with regard to Ruin, Redemption and Regeneration from the passage now before

us! I pray you, never regard that story of the serpent as a fable. It is said, nowadays, that it is a mere allegory. Yet there is nothing in the Book to mark where history ends and parable begins–it all runs on as actual history and as Bishop Horsley forcibly remarks, "If any part of this narrative is allegorical, no part is naked matter of fact." It seems to me that if there was only an allegorical serpent, there was an allegorical Paradise, with allegorical rivers and allegorical trees. And the men and women were both allegorical and the chapter which speaks of their creation is an allegory. And the only thing that exists is an allegorical Heaven and an allegorical earth. If the Book of Genesis is an allegory, it is an allegory all through–and you have an allegorical Abraham–with allegorical circumcision.

Then you would have an allegorical Jacob and an allegorical Judah–and it is not unfair to push the theory onward and impute to Judah allegorical descendants called Jews. But if you borrow any money from this race, you will not find them allegorical when you have to pay! It is idle to call the narrative of the Fall a mere allegory–one had better say at once that he does not believe the Bible. There is something sane about that declaration, although it is folly. But to say, "Oh, yes, it is a venerable volume and worthy to be studied, but it is padded out with many an allegory," is to say something which confutes itself if you come to look into it.

The Bible is intended to be real history and it contains some portions which, by the consent of everybody, are real history. But

Moses could not be an historian and yet set mere fables before us as a part of his story. To write a jumble of allegory and of fact causes a man to lose the character of a reliable historian and we had better repudiate him at once. There was a real serpent, as there was a real Paradise. There was a real Adam and Eve who stood at the head of our race, and they really sinned and our race is really fallen. Believe this. When Satan, "that old serpent, the Devil and Satan"–as the Apocalypse calls him–determined to tempt Eve in order that he might destroy the race in which God evidently took much delight, he could not appear to the woman as a spirit.

Spirits are not to be discerned by the eye since a pure spirit is a thing which none of the outward senses of human beings can apprehend. An immaterial spirit must be invisible and therefore he must embody himself in some way or other before he can be seen. That Satan has power to enter into living bodies is clear, for he did so upon a very large scale with regard to men in the days of Christ. He and his legions were even compelled to enter into the bodies of swine rather than be cast into the deep. Being compelled to have an embodiment, the master evil spirit perceived the serpent to be at that time among the most subtle of all creatures–and therefore he entered into the serpent as feeling that he would be most at home in that animal.

Out of the serpent he spoke to Eve as though the serpent itself had spoken. There was an actual and material serpent, but the evil spirit

who is known as “the old serpent” was there, possessing the natural serpent with all his masterly cunning. Cruelly determining to lead the human race into sin that he might thus ruin it and triumph over God, the fallen angel did not hesitate to assume a reptile form. Well might Milton make him say–

“O foul descent! that I, who once contended
With gods to sit the highest, am now constrained
Into a beast; and, mixed with bestial slime,
This essence to incarnate, and imbrute,
That to the height of deity aspired!”

Notice carefully, that when the Lord comes to deal with the serpent, He does not question him as to his guilt and the reason of it. And the reason is, perhaps, that the guilt of the arch-enemy was self-evident or, better still, because the Lord had no design of mercy for him. He meant to make no Covenant of Grace for the devil or his angels. He took not up angels, though he took up the seed of Abraham.

In the infinite Sovereignty of God He passed by the fallen angels, but He chose to raise fallen man. Those who quibble at the Doctrine of Election should answer this question–Why is it that God has left devils without hope and yet has sent His Son to redeem mankind? Is not Divine Sovereignty manifested here? We can give no answer to the question, What is man that God thus visits him with distinguishing Grace, except this–“He will have

mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion"? Intending, therefore, no forgiveness to this evil spirit, the Lord put no questions to him.

His interrogation of our first parents was a sign of mercy. When God chides with a man's conscience, it is with the view of blessing him. Do I speak to any man here whose sense of sin is aroused, who is accused by the Word of God, who feels the Spirit of God working within him as a spirit of bondage? You may be hopeful because it is so. If God had meant to destroy you, He would have left you alone, even as He left the serpent without a word of expostulation and He would have passed sentence upon you speedily. The very rebukes of God are tokens of His favor towards men. With the serpent, that is, with the evil spirit, God had no upbraiding, but dealt at once by way of doom. He pronounced a sentence upon the serpent, which, while it was terrible to him, is most encouraging to us. And so far as our first parents understood it, it must have been a sun of light to their dark, depressed souls.

For many a year this was the lone star of believing hearts–this Gospel of the serpent's doom. Satan was their enemy. He had done them wrong. He was also God's enemy and God would fight against him and call them into His battle. He would raise up One who would suffer, but would win the victory–One whom He calls "the Seed of the woman." By Him Satan's head would be bruised and in that very fact the race of man would be unspeakably blest!

Last Lords-Day morning [] I introduced to you Immanuel–God with us, born of a virgin. We are now running on the same lines and again I would speak of our Lord Jesus as the woman's Seed and extol Him as espousing our quarrel and undoing the mischief which the old serpent has worked in us.

In Him His believing people shall shortly bruise Satan under their feet. We will consider the whole passage and draw from it seven lessons. As there are so many, I cannot dwell upon any one of them at length, but must give you hints of the wealth of meaning which lies within the words of these most instructive verses. With regard to our Archenemy, we may here learn much.

First, notice THE INSTRUCTIVE FORM UNDER WHICH SATAN APPEARS. The text begins, "The Lord God said unto the serpent." Under the serpent form he beguiled the woman and under that form he was condemned. He is a serpent, still. He can go about among the weak and defenseless as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, but he is most at home as the embodiment of a serpent. The serpent was most subtle and so is the Evil One most cunning. You think you understand the ways of Satan but you are mistaken. You have been tempted by him these 30 years and you believe your experience can unravel all his plots.

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, he has been engaged in the work of tempting men for nearly 6,000 years and he is not only much older, but he is far more acute and more sagacious than you are. His ways

are not easily found out and though we are not ignorant of his devices, we know not which device he will next use. If we have successfully escaped his nets for 40 years, the skillful fowler may even yet entangle us. We have need each day to cry, “Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from the Evil One.” John writes of him in the Revelation as “that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceives the whole world.” He is more cunning than the wisest–how soon he entangled Solomon! He is stronger than the strongest–how fatally he overthrew Samson!

Yes, and men after God’s own heart, like David, have been led into most grievous sins by his seductions. We do not know where he now lurks, or from what quarter he will next shoot his arrows, but we may rest assured that he is always plotting mischief against the people of God and he is working to effect their pollution. We may wisely enter into Paul’s anxiety when he wrote to the Corinthians, “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” From the evil machinations of the Subtle One, may the Lord deliver us!

A serpent is very insinuating. It can enter where another creature could not. Ever so small an opening makes room for a serpent and it winds itself in without noise. Satan is very insinuating and as he entered Paradise, so can he penetrate into the most secret and sacred places. He creeps into the Church, watch though we may.

He creeps into houses though sanctified by devotion. Have you never found him intruding into your closet during your prayers? There may seem to be no loophole and yet there he is, where he is least expected. Has he not wound himself into your families? Has he not crops in your hearts? How can we keep him out? We watch against his attacks from without but, behold, he has found a lodging place within! Subtle and insinuating is Satan–he is a serpent, indeed!

And how venomous! What poison one fang of the old serpent will throw into our moral system! Look around and see how many have been poisoned with the desire for strong drink, with lust, with avarice, with pride, with anger, with unbelief. Fiery serpents are among us and many die of their venom. If we tolerate the least sin, it is a burning drop in the veins of the soul! One touch of the fangs of this serpent will work immeasurable sorrow, even if the soul is saved from death. It is only the power of God that keeps us from being destroyed by this viper! Had he his will, he is a spirit so malignant that no heir of Heaven would survive! O God, keep Your own! Deliver us from the Evil One!

In all probability the reptile called the serpent was a nobler creature before the Fall than now. The words of our text, so far as they literally concern the serpent, threaten that a change would be worked in him. It has been a sort of speculative opinion that the creature either had wings, or was able to move without creeping

upon the earth as it now does. Of that we know nothing. But assuredly the serpent is a hated thing with which manhood is at war–and its form and habit typify all that is mean and cunning. There is nothing noble, nothing brave, nothing true about the idea of a serpent.

Satan was among the first-born of the morning, a swift and shining servant of God, but he transgressed against his Sovereign and fell. And now he is nothing but a serpent–malignant, base, cunning, and a liar. He is fitly figured by "the wily snake." "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). He goes out to deceive the nations (Rev. 20:8). He works signs and lying wonders (2 Thess. 2:9). He lays snares, and takes men captive (2 Tim. 2:26).

Keep before your minds the form of a serpent and remember that after this manner Satan will attack you. Only let me soften your fears with the sight of another serpent–the serpent of brass lifted upon a pole brought life to those whom evil serpents had injured. It seems to me a wonder of condescending Grace that our Lord Jesus could allow Himself to be symbolized by a form which had been assumed by the great enemy of souls! Yes, there was the bronze serpent lifted high upon a pole and they that looked, though bitten by fiery serpents, lived! Even thus is Jesus on the Cross the sure

remedy for sin of every kind. Look out with all your eyes of caution for the old serpent, the devil. But at the same time look up with all your eyes of faith to Him who was made a curse for us that we might live.

II. So much for the first lesson, now for the second. Observe THE MEMORABLE FACT AS TO SATAN'S CONDITION. "The Lord God said unto the serpent, Because you have done this, you are cursed" and that curse was made emphatic and superlative. He with whom we have to contend has the curse of God upon him even now! God has blessed His people, but he has cursed their great enemy! The curse of God blights and blasts, even as in the case of the fruitless fig tree, which, beneath the sentence of the Lord Jesus, withered away.

The curse of God has fallen upon that foul spirit who represents evil–it could not justly be otherwise. This is his shame and your strength. The next time you are fighting with Apollyon, here is a keen shaft to hurl at him. Tell him he is accursed of God and what has he to do with those whom the Lord has blessed? He whom God blesses is blessed, but he whom God curses is cursed, indeed. Upon all the power of sin and error, yes, upon Satan himself, who is the ringleader in evil things, the curse of God abides and this is prophetic of their overthrow. The truth shall conquer, holiness shall overcome. Falsehood and wrong bear the brand of Cain upon their brow and they shall wither from the root.

Satan was cursed with reference to us. Our fall has brought him no gain, but an increase of Divine displeasure, of disappointment and envy. He was under God's wrath before, but now the Lord says concerning him, "You are cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field." Though there comes pain and groaning upon all the lower creation through man's sin, there shall come upon the old serpent a far more exceeding measure of the curse because he has dared to lead into revolt the race of man. Who will willingly be the slave of a tyrant whom the Lord has cursed? Not only Satan, but every form of sin is under the curse. The Tempter would make you think that some shapes of sin are blessed, but this is false.

All sin has a curse attached to it. Keep far from it. Is it false doctrine? It is accursed! Is it living in wantonness and carnal pleasure? It is accursed! Touch it not! You cannot do wrong without defiling yourself with that which God has cursed. You may imagine that you will gain many good things by yielding a little to sin, but this is a lie of the Adversary–evil is loss and ruin. The curse which God pronounced on the serpent is pronounced on the whole of his seed and everything that is impure, untruthful and unholy lies under the ban of God. Brethren, if for Christ's sake we should suffer poverty, or reproach, or slander, or even death, there would be a blessing in it all! But if by means of doing evil we should rise to wealth, honor and ease, we should find in all our gains a burning curse! Who prizes gold with the curse upon it? It is cankered, and

will eat into the soul. God knows what is cursed and what is blessed–and we may well believe His declaration that evil is meaner than the brutes and more sensual than the wild beasts of the field.

All this is a call to escape from the ways of sin. Tremble lest you be found under the curse! Hasten to flee to Him who can turn the curse into a blessing, even Jesus, who bore our sins in His own body on the Cross and so bore away the curse from all Believers. The memorable fact that Satan and the power of evil are under the curse should hearten us in our conflict with spiritual wickedness. We can overcome them, for the curse of the Lord has gone forth against them.

III. For a third lesson, note THE REMARKABLE PROSTRATION which fell upon the serpent–"Upon your belly shall you go." So does the serpent move and so does evil labor to make progress. Satan moves always as a fallen one–not with the dignity of holiness, but groveling low. God has put upon his every movement the indication that he is no longer great and wise. The movements of the Prince of Darkness are base and sensual–"Upon your belly shall you go." His seed also take to the same posture in going. I have seen the foes of the Truth of God contending against the faith of God's people and I have marked their policies, their plots and their plans–and I have said to myself, "Verily, it is written, Upon your belly shall you go."

Beings engaged in evil designs have no other way of going but with tricks, devices, concealments and double meanings. When men deny the Scriptures and the Truth of God, they always go to work in an underhand, mean and serpentine style–"Upon your belly shall you go." If guilty man begins to plot for his own advantage, scheme for his own glory and aim at perverting the Truth of God, you will notice that he never takes a bold, open, manly stand. No, he dodges, he conceals, he twists and shifts–"Upon your belly shall you go." Sin is a mean and despicable thing. The greatest potentate of evil was here doomed to cringe and crawl and his seed have never forgotten their father's posture. All the objects of the powers of evil are groveling.

What do they seek after? When men forsake the way of holiness, they rush after polluted and idle amusements. What is there in the world's pleasure which is ennobling? Carnal mirth is still a groveling thing–"Upon your belly shall you go." A professing man gives up the separated way, enters upon modern society and he no longer walks with God. What is his general course? Within a short time we find him careless of all religion and tolerant of licentiousness. It is ever so–"Upon your belly shall you go." If you give way to evil, you shall go down, down, down till your god is your belly and you glory in your shame! If a man would be great, let him serve God! If a man would rise to the angels, yes, rise to God, let him obey the commands of his Maker. But if he wishes to

degrade himself below the adder, which “glides obscure through bush and brake,” his easy method is to follow Satan and rebel against the Most High.

IV. Observe, in the fourth place, THE PERPETUAL DEGRADATION put upon the serpent–“And dust shall you eat all the days of your life.” Satan is now to live a defeated life, for such is the force of the expression, “His enemies shall lick the dust.” It signifies that they are utterly defeated. So Satan, all his life long, exists as a conquered and chained enemy–his power is broken and he knows it. He is defeated as to the whole of his great scheme and he is to be defeated in the details of it all the days of his life!

When he met our Lord in the wilderness, he crept upon his belly with serpentine temptations. But our Lord, by His holiness, made him eat dust! How often was he, in our Lord’s lifetime, made to feel that his conqueror had come! He cringed before Him and implored that he might not be tormented before his time. When he saw the Lord Jesus upon the Cross, having planned, as he thought, to crush Him by death, he began to dread defeat. When he heard Him cry, “It is finished,” and felt His iron heel upon his head, he knew, to his eternal horror, that he had only fashioned for Christ an opportunity of redeeming mankind! What a mouthful of dust he had to eat in that day! None more wretched in the universe than Satan, whose works the bleeding Savior had destroyed!

It was a day of bitter defeat for the enemy when our Lord rose from the dead. The old serpent had watched the pale corpse, but when he saw it live and when the angel rolled away the stone and Jesus, the Christ, came forth to die no more, I guarantee you the serpent ate dust that day! And when the Apostles stood forth–men whom Satan despised, humble fishermen–and the Holy Spirit came down upon them, again it was fulfilled, "Dust shall you eat." When the nations were converted, the idols were broken and the Truth of God mightily prevailed, then did Satan remember the words, "Dust shall you eat all the days of your life."

He has more humiliation yet to come. Arise, and preach Christ and win souls and the great enemy of souls shall find his power diminished, his name abhorred and again he shall lick the dust! Forever, dust shall be the serpent's meat, for what he does gain always disappoints him. He thought he had obtained a great advantage when he won the woman to disobedience–but he had made a rod for his own back since her Seed would become his eternal antagonist! The Fall of man led up to the Incarnation and the Atonement–and by these Satan is thrown down. By man has come the Resurrection and so the defeat of Death, who was first-born of Hell. The victory of the devil in Eden is blotted out by the victory of Jesus at Calvary!

If Satan ever knows pleasure at all, it is of the foulest and most unsatisfactory kind–dust is his meat. There is nothing satisfying in

the pleasures of rebellion. He remains a disappointed, restless being. The most cunning error which he invents and sustains by philosophy is no more than dust. His whole cause, for which he has labored these thousands of years with a horrible perseverance–his whole cause, I say–will dissolve into dust and will be blown away as smoke! Still does he feed himself upon dust. Let those who are servants of Satan know assuredly that as they are living in sin, they will have to eat at their father's table and learn the emptiness of all the pleasures of sin–and the worthlessness of all the treasures of evil.

Everything that sin can bring you is just so much dust–foul eating, insufficient, clogging, killing. Though you hoard up wealth, gold is nothing but dust to a dying man. Though you gain all earthly honor, it, too, dissolves in dust. This is the misery of that great spirit who is called the Prince of Darkness, that he must eat dust all his days! But what misery it must be to be only some poor subject in that unhallowed kingdom and still to be doomed to the same loathsome fare! "Dust shall you eat all the days of your life." Note that right well–and may God deliver you from such feeding!

Let us, in the next place, think upon THE CEASELESS WAR with which God threatens the serpent–"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed." Satan reckoned upon an easy conquest and had apparently gained it–but he would find his Victim become his antagonist and at length his

conqueror. Satan can never know peace–he seeks rest and finds none. When he talked to that woman with his guileful words of flattery, he thought he had made a friend of her. The charming creature in whom God had embodied the perfection of beauty–had he not seduced her from obedience to the great King? Had he not used her as the instrument to make her husband a traitor to his God?

They were great friends–those two. She felt, in the moment that she took the fruit, that she owed much to the serpent for giving her the gentle hint whereby she was led to find the opening of her eyes and the uplifting of her nature to be as God. How grievously was she deceived! Nor was the serpent to find himself advantaged. The league was broken and the Deceiver and his victim were at enmity. God declares most solemnly, “I will put enmity between you and the woman.” God will see that there is no peace. There is a war to be waged between Satan and the woman’s Seed so long as the world stands. Sometimes it looks as if there was going to be peace, for the world flatters the Church and the Church seeks to conform herself to the world.

As before Noah’s flood the sons of God and the daughters of men were joined in unhallowed alliance, so again and again there have been attempts at truce. But peace there cannot be! Today Satan tempts the ministers of Christ to soften down the Gospel, adapt it to the age and make it popular. And he also labors to throw down the

division between the Church and the world. “Fill up the gulf!” he says. “Cover it over like an old sewer and forget that it ever existed!” Thus he speaks like the sinner in the Proverbs–“Cast in your lot among us, let us all have one purse.” But mark this, all you that hear me–though all the pulpits should be captured and though it should seem that the very elect were deceived, yet God will not leave Himself without witnesses but will find, somewhere or other, some chosen ones of the Seed of the woman to carry on the holy war even to the end. Jehovah has laid His hand upon His Throne and He has sworn to have war with evil from generation to generation.

See how it was in Israel when the high priest of God, even Eli, winked at sin when his own sons, as priests, committed iniquity at the tabernacle door and all Israel was thus made to do evil. Would not the lamp of Truth go out? Would not the worship of the Lord be utterly abhorred? Ah, no–a little child was brought by his mother into the tabernacle to be the servant of the Lord and in him the Lord found a champion! In the night did God call Samuel and he answered, “Here am I.” This Samuel stood before the Lord and gave forth prophecies which made both the ears of him that heard them to tingle–and the Lord was again great in Israel.

Do not tremble for the ark of the Lord! God will not suffer the old serpent to spread his slime over all things. Satan’s throne shall always be opposed. This enmity is to be kept up by God Himself.

He said, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed.” See here the Church of God announced in this verse! You have not only the Gospel here, but the Church, also! Christ, the Seed of the woman, is the Head–and all who are in Christ are His body–He and they are the one Seed. In these words the Lord set up the Church which continues to this day–a seed which is opposed to Satan and to evil–a seed which will remain, by the power of the Spirit of God, waging constant war with the powers of evil.

Do we belong to that seed? In this seed there is a deep-seated hatred to everything that is false and evil. God will see that this seed shall never yield to the power of evil, for still it shall stand true, “I will put enmity between you and the woman.” As long as there is false doctrine, there shall be a protesting reformer. As long as there is any form of wickedness extant, there shall be a witness born from on high to contend with it. This seed is born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of the Spirit of God who dwells in the true seed of the woman. And this seed shall be valiant for the Lord of Hosts till the last enemy shall be destroyed.

Which side are you on, my Friend, this morning? I put the question very pointedly to everyone here–Are you born from above? That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit–and only this last is the true seed of the woman.

VI. Sixthly, observe that we see in the text THE LIMITED ACHIEVEMENT of the old serpent. What will he accomplish by all his schemes? “You shall bruise His heel.” That is all. This is after the serpent’s manner. Satan is “an adder in the path, that bites the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.” If he dares not attack you openly, he will assail you from behind. He is as a snake in the grass, biting at the heel of the traveler. The result of Satan’s 6,000 years of cunning and enmity is that he has bruised the heel of his Victim. That bruised heel is painful enough.

Behold our Lord in His human Nature sorely bruised. He was betrayed, bound, accused, buffeted, scourged, spit upon. He was nailed to the Cross. He hung there in thirst and fever and darkness and desertion. They pierced His hands and His feet. And last, they cut his heart open and there flowed from it both blood and water. Satan by death bruised the heel of the woman’s Seed. It is a sad business, but when our Lord thought of the Resurrection, the salvation of His chosen and the conquest of the world, it seemed to Him to be a light thing–“He endured the Cross, despising the shame.”

Behold the Seed of the woman as further comprehending all the Lord’s believing people! Satan has bruised their heel to the utmost of his power. Through the long persecutions he has been assailing the heel of the Church. Many of the saints the devil cast into prison and others he caused to be tortured for Christ’s sake. But their souls

were not conquered! He could only bruise their heel–their spirit soared out of his reach. And you, today, when tempted and tried, and cast down, may be comforted because your Head is not hurt, for Jesus reigns in Heaven! The waters are black and they cover the body, but our Head is above the billows and the body is safe.

The serpent's bruises stay in the heel and spread no further. The suffering of the Church, however great, is but a light affliction, not worthy to be compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Thank God the enemy can only bruise your heel! The cause of God and Truth in the world may, by Satan's subtle power, be for a while sadly bruised as to the heel of its progress, but it cannot be wounded in the heart of its Truth. The kingdom advances painfully because of the bruised heel, but it fails not–even when lame it takes the prey. Some doctrine which, possibly, may have been stated in a questionable manner is more fully studied, more carefully made known and so even the heel-bruise works for good. Though the Church of God may be under a cloud for a time, yet she will break out with all the greater splendor before long. "You shall bruise His heel."

Make the best you can of it, Satan, it does not come to much! All that you are at your greatest is but a heel-nibbler and nothing more. You are not allowed to poison the heel, but only to bruise it. Though the man of God walks limpingly a while and suffers where the fangs have been, yet, leaning on his Beloved, he comes up from

the wilderness without fail–and forgetting the bruises of his heel–he rejoices in the triumphs of his glorious Head!

VII. Now we come to the seventh lesson. We have marked the limited triumph of Satan and we now observe HIS FINAL DOOM. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her Seed; it shall bruise your head." Here is the end of the great conflict. Satan, who heads the powers of evil in the world, is to fight it out with all his cunning and strength–and he is so far to succeed as to bruise the heel of the champion with whom he fights–but in the end the Seed of the woman is to bruise his head.

This was accomplished when the Lord Jesus died and by dying honored the Law, put away sin, slew death and defeated Hell. When the great Substitute drank the cup of wrath to its utmost dregs for every believing soul. When He unhinged the gate of the sepulcher and carried it away, as Samson carried the gates of Gaza–post, and bar, and all. When He opened the doorways of Heaven and led captivity captive, then indeed, the head of the dragon was broken. What can Satan now do? Is not the accuser of the Brethren cast down? He is still doing his little best in bitterness and malice, but the Christ has crushed him! Yes, the very Christ who "was despised and rejected of men." The Man of the thorn crown and the marred visage. The Man of bleeding shoulders and pierced hands and feet. The Man who was born of a virgin. The Seed of the woman has broken the power of the enemy!

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! He has cast down the Prince of Darkness from his high places! Did He not, Himself, say, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven”? He has bruised the serpent’s head! This is done in all Believers, also, and shall be done yet more effectually. Brothers and Sisters, in that day when the Holy Spirit led us to trust in the Lord Jesus, we bruised the serpent’s head! Satan had been accustomed to command and we to obey–and thus sin had dominion over us. But as soon as ever we believed in Christ, that dominion was ended and Dagon fell before the ark of the Lord! I see the serpent rise above me. This great python, with opened jaws, gapes upon me as though he would swallow me up whole. But I am not afraid! O serpent, I have bruised your head in Christ Jesus my Lord, for I, too, am of the Seed of the woman! The serpent cannot lift himself against the chosen Seed. What can he do with a broken head? He knows that God has decreed that every Believer shall triumph over him. It is written, “God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” Hallelujah!

Once again. This bruise upon the head of the Evil One is a mortal stroke. If he had been bruised upon the tail, or upon the neck he might have survived. But the Lord shall utterly slay the kingdom of evil and crush out its power. Reigning evil shall cease and Divine Grace shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life. There shall be a new Heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. Christ Himself, the Seed of the woman, shall come a

second time and He shall reign on earth among His ancients gloriously. Then shall He ride forth prosperously, because of truth and righteousness–and His right hand shall exalt His people. His foot shall tread down their enemy. May you and I be among the happy throng that shall salute the Seed of the woman in His Second Advent! May we reign with Him in that day! By the Seed of the woman is Paradise restored to us and all the mischief of the Fall is undone, for He restores that which He took not away.

And now, my Hearer, which side are you on? Do any of you think that you shall not surely die? You talk like your father–and you are his children! Do any of you say God is a hard Governor? Has He said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden"? You are like your own father in this, also. And do you move in snaky, cunning ways? Are you given to craft and policy? Dare you tell a lie and then forge another to prop up the first? You are of your father the devil, for you do his works! Are you opposed to God and truth and righteousness? And do you cry out for what is called "liberty," that is, licentiousness and permission to indulge your own passions? Then you are on the evil side! Do you aspire to know good and evil? Young man, would you go into evil haunts to see vice and learn its ways? Do you long to see "life," as they call it? Are you familiar with the sensual and the profane? Ah, then you are listening to that old deceiver who allures you into his deadly nets! I pray you, escape from his seductions!

Is it well with you? Do you look to Jesus, the Seed of the woman? Are you trusting in Him to break the power of the enemy? Do you wish the power of sin to be broken in yourself? Do you desire to have the very head of it crushed to powder? Do you pine to be free from sin and holy as God is holy? Are you trusting in Jesus to have this same thing worked in you? Ah, then you are on the conquering side! Victory shall be yours through the blood of the Lamb!

Thus have we found much Gospel in the wonderful sentence pronounced upon that old serpent, the devil. But yet we have only skimmed the surface. To the eternal God be glory, world without end. Amen. PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON–Genesis 3.HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"–917, 470, 477.

Ge 3:15 • Christ the Conqueror of Satan

SERMON 1326

Christ The Conqueror Of Satan

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

Genesis 3:15

THIS is the first Gospel sermon that was ever delivered upon the surface of this earth! It was a memorable discourse, indeed, with Jehovah, Himself, for the preacher and the whole human race and the Prince of Darkness for the audience. It must be worthy of our heartiest attention. Is it not remarkable that this great Gospel promise should have been delivered so soon after the transgression? As yet no sentence had been pronounced upon either

of the two human offenders, but the promise was given under the form of a sentence pronounced upon the serpent. Not yet had the woman been condemned to painful travail, or the man to exhausting labor, or even the soil to the curse of thorn and thistle.

Truly "mercy rejoices against judgment." Before the Lord had said, "Dust you are and unto dust you shall return," He was pleased to say that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head! Let us rejoice, then, in the swift mercy of God, which in the early watches of the night of sin came with comfortable words to us. These words were not directly spoken to Adam and Eve, but they were directed distinctly to the serpent, himself, and that by way of punishment to him for what he had done. It was a day of cruel triumph to him–such joy as his dark mind is capable of had filled him, for he had indulged his malice and gratified his spite.

He had, in the worst sense, destroyed a part of God's works. He had introduced sin into the new world. He had stamped the human race with his own image and gained new forces to promote rebellion and to multiply transgression and, therefore, he felt that sort of gladness which a fiend can know who bears a Hell within himself. But now God comes in, takes up the quarrel personally, and causes him to be disgraced on the very battlefield upon which he had gained a temporary success. He tells the dragon that He will undertake to deal with him–this quarrel shall not be between the serpent and man, but between God and the serpent!

God said, in solemn words, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed,” and He promises that there shall rise, in fullness of time a Champion, who, though He suffers, shall smite in a vital part the power of evil and bruise the serpent’s head. This was all the more, it seems to me, a comfortable message of mercy to Adam and Eve, because they would feel sure that the tempter would be punished. Perhaps, however, by thus obliquely giving the promise, the Lord meant to say, “Not for your sakes do I do this, O fallen man and woman, nor for the sake of your descendants, but for My own name and honor’s sake, that it be not profaned and blasphemed among the fallen spirits. I undertake to repair the mischief which has been caused by the tempter, that My name and My Glory may not be diminished among the immortal spirits who look down upon the scene.”

All this would be very humbling, but yet consolatory to our parents if they thought of it, seeing that mercy given for God’s sake is always, to our troubled apprehension, more sure than any favor which could be promised to us for our own sakes. Divine Sovereignty and Glory afford us a stronger foundation of hope than merit, even if merit can be supposed to exist.

Now we must note concerning this first Gospel sermon that on it the earliest Believers stayed themselves. This was all that Adam had by way of Revelation, and all that Abel had received. This one lone star shone in Abel’s sky. He looked up to it and he believed.

By its light he spelt out, “sacrifice,” and therefore he brought of the firstlings of his flock and laid them upon the altar. He proved, in his own person how the seed of the serpent hated the seed of the woman, for his brother slew him for his testimony.

Although Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied concerning the Second Advent, yet he does not appear to have uttered anything new concerning the first coming, so that, still this one promise remained as man’s sole word of hope. The torch which flamed within the gates of Eden, just before man was driven forth, lit up the world to all Believers until the Lord was pleased to give more light and to renew and enlarge the Revelation of His Covenant, when He spoke to His servant, Noah. Those hoary fathers who lived before the flood rejoiced in the mysterious language of our text and resting on it, they died in faith.

Nor, Brothers and Sisters, must you think it a slender Revelation, for, if you attentively consider, it is wonderfully full of meaning. If it had been on my heart to handle it doctrinally, this morning, I think I could have shown you that it contains all the Gospel. There lies within it, as an oak lies within an acorn, all the great Truths of God which make up the Gospel of Christ. Observe that here is the grand mystery of the Incarnation. Christ is that Seed of the woman who is here spoken of and there is a hint, not darkly, given as to how that Incarnation would be effected. Jesus was not born after the ordinary manner of the sons of men.

Mary was overshadowed of the Holy Spirit and, “the Holy Thing,” which was born of her, was, as to His humanity, the Seed of the woman. As it is written, “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel.” The promise plainly teaches that the Deliverer would be born of a woman and, carefully viewed, it also foreshadows the Divine method of the Redeemer’s conception and birth. So, also, is the doctrine of the two seeds plainly taught here–“I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her Seed.” There was evidently to be in the world a Seed of the woman on God’s side against the serpent, and a seed of the serpent that should always be upon the evil side even as it is to this day.

The Church of God and the synagogue of Satan both exist. We see an Abel and a Cain, an Isaac and an Ishmael, a Jacob and an Esau. Those that are born after the flesh, being the children of their father, the devil, for his works they do, but those that are born again–being born after the Spirit, after the power of the life of Christ–are thus in Christ Jesus the Seed of the woman and contend earnestly against the dragon and his seed. Here, too, the great fact of the sufferings of Christ is clearly foretold–“You shall bruise His heel.” Within the compass of those words we find the whole story of our Lord’s sorrows from Bethlehem to Calvary.

“He shall bruise your head”–there is the breaking of Satan’s regal power! There is the clearing away of sin. There is the destruction of

death by Resurrection. There is the leading of captivity captive in the ascension. There is the victory of Truth in the world through the descent of the Spirit. And there is the latter-day Glory in which Satan shall be bound. And there is, lastly, the casting of the Evil One and all his followers into the Lake of Fire. The conflict and the conquest are both in the compass of these few fruitful words. They may not have been fully understood by those who first heard them, but to us they are now full of light.

The text, at first, looks like a flint, hard and cold. But sparks fly from it plentifully, for hidden fires of infinite Love and Grace lie concealed within. Over this promise of a gracious God we ought to exceedingly rejoice. We do not know what our first parents understood by it, but we may be certain that they gathered a great amount of comfort from it. They must have understood that they were not, then and there, to be destroyed, because the Lord had spoken of a "Seed." They would argue that it must be necessary that Eve should live if there should be a Seed from her.

They understood, too, that if that Seed was to overcome the serpent and bruise his head, it must promise good to themselves. They could not fail to see that there was some great, some mysterious benefit to be conferred upon them by the victory which their Seed would achieve over the instigator of their ruin. They went on in faith upon this, and were comforted in travail and in

toil–and I doubt not both Adam and his wife, in the faith thereof–entered into everlasting rest.

This morning I intend to handle this text in three ways. First, we shall notice its facts. Secondly, we shall consider the experience within the heart of each Believer which tallies to those facts. And then, thirdly, the encouragement which the text and its connection, as a whole, afford to us.

THE FACTS. The facts are four and I call your earnest attention to them. The first is enmity was excited. The text begins, "I will put enmity between you and the woman." They had been very friendly. The woman and the serpent had conversed together. She thought, at the time, that the serpent was her friend and she was so much his friend that she took his advice in the teeth of God's precept and was willing to believe bad things of the great Creator because this wicked, crafty serpent insinuated the same!

Now, at the moment when God spoke, that friendship between the woman and the serpent had already, in a measure, come to an end for she had accused the serpent to God, and said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." So far, so good. The friendship of sinners does not last long. They have already begun to quarrel and now the Lord comes in and graciously takes advantage of the quarrel which had commenced, and says, "I will carry this disagreement a great deal further, I will put enmity between you and the woman." Satan counted on man's descendants being his

confederates, but God would break up this covenant with Hell and raise up a seed which should war against the Satanic power!

Thus we have, here, God's first declaration that He will set up a rival kingdom to oppose the tyranny of sin and Satan. That He will create in the hearts of a chosen seed an enmity against evil so that they shall fight against it and, with many a struggle and pain, shall overcome the Prince of Darkness. The Divine Spirit has abundantly achieved this plan and purpose of the Lord, combating the fallen angel by a glorious Man–making man to be Satan's foe and conqueror. Henceforth the woman was to hate the Evil One and, I do not doubt but what she did so. She had abundant cause for so doing and as often as she thought of him, it would be with infinite regret that she could have listened to his malicious and deceitful talk.

The woman's seed has also evermore had enmity against the Evil One. I mean not the carnal seed, for Paul tells us, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." The carnal seed of the man and the woman are not meant, but the spiritual seed, even Christ Jesus and those who are in Him. Wherever you meet these, they hate the serpent with a perfect hatred. We would, if we could, destroy from our souls every work of Satan and out of this poor afflicted world of ours we would root up every evil which he has planted. That Seed of the woman, that glorious One–for He

speaks not of seeds as of many but of Seed that is One–you know how He abhorred the devil and all his devices.

There was enmity between Christ and Satan, for He came to destroy the works of the devil and to deliver those who are under bondage to him. For that purpose was He born! For that purpose did He live! For that purpose did He die! For that purpose He has gone into Glory and, for that purpose, He will come again, that everywhere He may find out His adversary and utterly destroy him and his works from among the sons of men. This putting of the enmity between the two seeds was the commencement of the plan of mercy, the first act in the program of Grace. Of the woman's Seed it was from now on said, "You love righteousness and hate wickedness: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows."

Then comes the second prophecy, which has also turned into a fact, namely the coming of the Champion. The Seed of the woman by promise is to champion the cause and oppose the dragon. That Seed is the Lord Jesus Christ! The Prophet Micah said, "But you, Bethlehem Ephratah; though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will He give them up, until the time that she which travails has brought forth." To none other than the Babe which was born in Bethlehem of the blessed Virgin can the words

of prophecy refer! She it was who did conceive and bear a Son, and it is concerning her Son that we sing, “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

On the memorable night at Bethlehem, when angels sang in Heaven, the Seed of the woman appeared! And as soon as ever He saw the light the old serpent, the devil, entered into the heart of Herod, if possible to slay Him, but the Father preserved Him and suffered none to lay hands on Him. As soon as He publicly came forward upon the stage of action, 30 years later, Satan met Him face to face. You know the story of the temptation in the wilderness, and how, there, the woman’s Seed fought with him who was a liar from the beginning. The devil assailed Him thrice with all the artillery of flattery, malice, craft and falsehood–but the peerless Champion stood unwounded and chased His foe from the field.

Then our Lord set up His kingdom and called one and another unto Him, and carried the war into the enemy’s country. In many places He cast out devils. He spoke to the wicked and unclean spirits and said, “I charge you come out of him,” and the demon was expelled. Legions of devils flew before Him–they sought to hide themselves in swine to escape from the terror of His Presence. “Are You come to torment us before our time?” was their cry when

the wonder-working Christ dislodged them from the bodies which they tormented!

Yes, and He made His own disciples mighty against the Evil One, for in His name they cast out devils, till Jesus said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven." Then there came a second personal conflict, for I take it that Gethsemane's sorrows were, to a great degree, caused by a personal assault of Satan, for our Master said, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." He said, also, "The Prince of this world comes." What a struggle it was! Though Satan had nothing in Christ, yet did he seek, if possible, to lead Him away from completing His great Sacrifice. And there did our Master sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground in the agony which it cost Him to contend with the fiend!

Then it was that our Champion began the last fight of all and won it to the bruising of the serpent's head. Nor did He end till He had spoiled principalities and powers and made a show of them openly–

"Now is the hour of darkness past,
Christ has assumed
His reigning power.
Behold the great accuser cast
Down from his seat to reign no more."

Our glorious Lord continues the conflict in His seed. We preach Christ Crucified and every sermon shakes the gates of Hell! We

bring sinners to Jesus by the Spirit's power and every convert is a stone torn down from the wall of Satan's mighty castle! Yes, and the day shall come when the Evil One shall be overcome everywhere, and the words of John in Revelation shall be fulfilled–"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

"And I heard a loud voice saying in Heaven, Now is come salvation; and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night." Thus did the Lord God, in the words of our text, promise a Champion who should be the Seed of the woman, between whom and Satan there should be war forever and ever–that Champion has come, the Man-Child has been born and though the dragon is angry with the woman and makes war with the remnant of her seed which keep the testimony of Jesus Christ, yet the battle is the Lord's, and the victory falls unto Him whose name is Faithful and True, who in righteousness does judge and make war.

The third fact which comes out in the text, though not quite in that order, is that our Champion's heel should be bruised. Do you need that I explain this? You know how all His life long His heel, that is, His lower part, His Human Nature, was perpetually being made to suffer. He carried our sicknesses and sorrows. But the

bruising came mainly when both in body and in mind His whole Human Nature was made to agonize. When His soul was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death and His enemies pierced His hands and His feet–and He endured the shame and pain of death by crucifixion.

Look at your Master and your King upon the Cross, all stained with blood and dust! There was His heel most cruelly bruised! When they take down that precious body and wrap it in fair white linen and in spices, and lay it in Joseph's tomb, they weep as they handle that casket in which the Deity had dwelt, for there, again, Satan had bruised His heel. It was not merely that God had bruised Him, "though it pleased the Father to bruise Him." But the devil had let loose Herod, Pilate, Caiaphas, the Jews and the Romans, all of them his tools, upon Him whom he knew to be the Christ, so that He was bruised of the old serpent.

That is all, however! It is only His heel, not His head which is bruised! For lo, the Champion rises again! The bruise was not mortal nor continual. Though He dies, yet so brief is the interval in which He slumbers in the tomb that His holy body does not see corruption and He comes forth perfect and lovely in His manhood, rising from His grave as from a refreshing sleep after a long day of toil! Oh the triumph of that hour! As Jacob only halted on his thigh when he overcame the Angel, so did Jesus only retain a scar on His heel, and that He bears to the skies as His glory and beauty! Before

the Throne He looks like a lamb that has been slain, but in the power of an endless life He lives unto God.

Then comes the fourth fact, namely, that while His heel was being bruised, He was to bruise the serpent's head. The figure represents the dragon as inflicting an injury upon the champion's heel, but at the same moment the Champion, Himself, with that heel, crushes the head of the serpent with fatal effect. By His sufferings, Christ has overthrown Satan. By the heel that was bruised, He has trod upon the head which devised the bruising–

"Lo, by the sons of Hell He dies;
But as He hangs 'twixt earth and skies,
He gives their prince a fatal blow,
And triumphs o'er the powers below."

Though Satan is not dead, my Brothers and Sisters–I was about to say, would God He were–and though he is not converted, and never will be, nor will the malice of his heart ever be driven from him, yet Christ has so far broken his head that he has missed his mark altogether!

He intended to make the human race the captives of his power, but they are redeemed from his iron yoke. God has delivered many of them and the day shall come when He will cleanse the whole earth from the serpent's slimy trail, so that the entire world shall be full of the praises of God. Satan thought that this world would be the arena of his victory over God and good–instead of which it is

already the grandest theater of Divine wisdom, love, Grace, and power! Even Heaven itself is not so resplendent with mercy as the earth is, for here it is the Savior poured out His blood, which cannot be said even of the courts of Paradise above!

Moreover Satan thought, no doubt, that when he had led our race astray and brought death upon them, he had effectually marred the Lord's work. He rejoiced that they would all pass under the cold seal of death and that their bodies would rot in the sepulcher. Had he not spoiled the handiwork of his great Lord? God may make man as a curious creature with intertwisted veins and blood, nerves, sinews and muscles, and He may put into his nostrils the breath of life, but, "Ah," said Satan, "I have infused a poison into him which will make him return to the dust from which he was taken."

But now, behold, our Champion, whose heel was bruised, has risen from the dead and given us a pledge that all His followers shall rise from the dead also! Thus is Satan foiled, for death shall not retain a bone, nor a piece of a bone, of one of those who belonged to the woman's seed! At the trump of the archangel, from the earth and from the sea they shall arise and this shall be their shout, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" Satan, knowing this, feels already that by the Resurrection, his head is broken. Glory be to the Christ of God for this! In multitudes of other ways the devil has been vanquished by

our Lord Jesus and so shall he ever be till he shall be cast into the Lake of Fire.

II. Let us now view OUR EXPERIENCE AS IT TALLIES WITH THESE FACTS. Now, Brothers and Sisters, we were by nature, as many of us as have been saved, the heirs of wrath even as others. It does not matter how godly our parents were–the first birth brought us no spiritual life for the promise is not to them which are born of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man–but only to those who are born of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." You cannot make it anything else and there it abides–the flesh, or carnal mind, abides in death. "It is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can be."

He who is born into this world but once, and knows nothing of the new birth, must place himself among the seed of the serpent, for only by regeneration can we know ourselves to be the true seed. How does God deal with us who are His called and chosen ones? He means to save us, and how does He work to that end? The first thing He does is, He comes to us in mercy and puts enmity between us and the serpent. That is the very first work of Grace. There was peace between us and Satan once–when he tempted, we yielded–whatever he taught us we believed. We were his willing slaves.

But perhaps you, my Brethren, can remember when first of all you begin to feel uneasy and dissatisfied. The world's pleasures no longer pleased you. All the juice seemed to have been taken out of

the apple and you had nothing left but the hard core which you could not feed upon at all. Then you suddenly perceived that you were living in sin and you were miserable about it! And though you could not get rid of sin, yet you hated it and sighed over it. And you cried and groaned. In your heart of hearts you remained no longer on the side of evil, for you began to cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

You were already, from of old, in the Covenant of Grace ordained to be the woman's seed–and now the decree began to manifest itself in life bestowed upon you and working in you. The Lord, in infinite mercy, dropped the Divine Life into your soul. You did not know it, but there it was, a spark of the celestial fire, the living and incorruptible seed which abides forever. You began to hate sin and you groaned under it as under a "tilling yoke." More and more it burdened you, you could not bear it, you hated the very thought of it! So it was with you–is it so now? Is there still enmity between you and the serpent? Indeed, you are more and more the sworn enemies of evil and you willingly acknowledge it!

Then came the Champion–that is to say, "Christ was formed in you the hope of glory." You heard of Him and you understood the truth about Him. And it seemed a wonderful thing that He should be your Substitute and stand in your place and bear your sin and all its curse and punishment. It seemed unbelievable that He should give His righteousness, yes, and His very self to you that you might

be saved! Ah, then you saw how sin could be overthrown, did you not? As soon as your heart understood Christ, then you saw that what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, Christ was able to accomplish–and that the power of sin and Satan under which you had been in bondage and which you now loathed–could and would be broken and destroyed because Christ had come into the world to overcome it.

Next, do you remember how you were led to see the bruising of Christ's heel and to stand in wonder and observe what the enmity of the serpent had worked in Him? Did you not begin to feel the bruised heel, yourself? Did not sin torment you? Did not the very thought of it vex you? Did not your own heart become a plague to you? Did not Satan begin to tempt you? Did he not inject blasphemous thoughts and urge you on to desperate measures? Did he not teach you to doubt the existence of God and the mercy of God, and the possibility of your salvation, and so on? This was his nibbling at your heel!

He is still at his old tricks. He worries whom he can't devour with a malicious joy. Did not your worldly friends begin to annoy you? Did they not give you the cold shoulder because they saw something about you so strange and foreign to their tastes? Did they not impute your conduct to fanaticism, pride, obstinacy, bigotry and the like? Ah, this persecution is the serpent's seed beginning to discover the woman's seed and to carry on the old

war! What does Paul say? “But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted Him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.” True godliness is an unnatural and strange thing to them and they cannot stand it! Though there are no stakes in Smithfield, nor racks in the Tower, yet the enmity of the human heart towards Christ and His seed is just the same, and very often shows itself in “trials of cruel mocking” which to tender hearts are very hard to bear.

Well, this is your heel being bruised in sympathy with the bruising of the heel of the glorious Seed of the woman! But, Brothers and Sisters, do you know something of the other fact, namely, that we conquer, for the serpent’s head is broken in us? How say you? Is not the power and dominion of sin broken in you? Do you not feel that you cannot sin because you are born of God? Isn’t it so that some sins which were masters of you, once, do not trouble you, now? I have known a man guilty of profane swearing, but from the moment of his conversion he has never had any difficulty in the matter. We have known a man snatched from drunkenness and the cure, by Divine Grace, has been very wonderful and complete.

We have known persons delivered from unclean living and they have at once become chaste and pure because Christ has smitten the old dragon such blows that he could not have power over them in that respect. The chosen seed will sin and mourn it, but they are

not slaves to sin–their heart goes not after it. They have to say, sometimes, “the thing I would not, that I do,” but they are wretched when it is so. They consent with their heart to the Law of God, that it is good, and they sigh and cry that they may be helped to obey it, for they are no longer under the slavery of sin–the serpent’s reigning power and dominion is broken in them.

It is broken, next, in this way, that the guilt of sin is gone. The great power of the serpent lies in unpardoned sin. He cries, “I have made you guilty! I brought you under the curse.” “No,” we say, “we are delivered from the curse and are now blessed, for it is written, ‘Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.’ We are no longer guilty, for who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Since Christ has justified, who is he that condemns?” Here is a swinging blow for the old dragon’s head, from such he will never recover!

Oftentimes the Lord also grants us to know what it is to overcome temptation and so to break the head of the fiend. Satan allures us with many baits. He has studied our points well. He knows the weakness of the flesh, but many and many a time, blessed be God, we have foiled him completely to his eternal shame! The devil must have felt himself mean that day when he tried to overthrow Job. He dragged him down to a dunghill, robbed him of everything, covered him with sores and yet could not make him yield!

Job conquered when he cried, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” A feeble man had vanquished a devil who could raise the wind and blow down a house! He was allowed to destroy a family who were feasting in it. Devil as he is, and crowned Prince of the power of the air, yet the poor bereaved Patriarch, sitting on the dunghill and covered with sores, being one of the woman’s seed and through the strength of the inner life won the victory over him!–

“You Sons of God oppose his rage,

Resist, and he’ll be gone!

Thus did our dearest Lord engage

Moreover, dear Brothers and Sisters, we have this hope that the very stain of sin in us will be destroyed. The day will come when we shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing–and we shall stand before the Throne of God, having suffered no injury whatever from the Fall and from all the machinations of Satan, for, “they are without fault before the Throne of God.”

What triumph that will be! “The Lord will tread Satan under your feet shortly.” When He has made you perfect and free from all sin, as He will do, you will have bruised the serpent’s head, indeed! And your resurrection, too, when Satan shall see you come up from the grave like one that has been perfumed in a bath of spices–when he shall see you arise in the image of Christ, with the same body which was sown in corruption and weakness raised in incorruption

and power–then will he feel an infinite chagrin and know that his head is bruised by the woman's Seed!

I ought to add that every time any one of us is made useful in saving souls we do, as it were, repeat the bruising of the serpent's head. When you go, dear Sister, among those poor children and pick them up from the gutters, where they are Satan's prey–where he finds the raw material for thieves and criminals–and when, through your means, by the Grace of God, the little wanderers become children of the living God, then you, in your measure bruise the old serpent's head! I pray you do not spare him!

When we, by preaching the Gospel, turn sinners from the error of their ways, so that they escape from the power of darkness, again we bruise the serpent's head! Whenever, in any shape or form, you are blessed to the aiding of the cause of truth and righteousness in the world, you, too, who were once beneath his power and even now have sometimes to suffer from his nibbling at your heel, you tread upon his head! In all deliverances and victories you overcome and prove the promise true–"You shall tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under feet. Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he has known My name." III. Let us speak awhile upon THE ENCOURAGEMENT which our text and the context yields to us, for it seems to me,to abound. I want you, Brethren, to exercise faith in the promise and be comforted. The

text evidently encouraged Adam very much. I do not think we have attached enough importance to the conduct of Adam after the Lord had spoken to him. Notice the simple but conclusive proof which he gave of his faith. Sometimes an action may be very small and unimportant, and yet, as a straw shows which way the wind blows, it may display at once, if it is thought over, the whole state of the man's mind.

Adam acted in faith upon what God said, for we read, "And Adam called his wife's name Eve (or Life) because she was the mother of all living" (Gen 3:20). She was not a mother at all, but as the life was to come through her by virtue of the promised Seed, Adam marks his full conviction of the truth of the promise, though at the time, the woman had borne no children! There stood Adam, fresh from the awful Presence of God, what more could He say? He might have said with the Prophet, "My flesh trembles for the fear of You," but even then he turns round to his fellow culprit as she stands there trembling, too, and he calls her Eve, mother of the life that is yet to be!

It was grandly spoken by father Adam! It makes him rise in our esteem. Had he been left to himself, he would have murmured, or at least despaired, but no, his faith in the new promise gave him hope! He uttered no word of repining against the condemnation to till with toil the unthankful ground, nor on Eve's part was there a word of repining over the appointed sorrows of motherhood–they

each accepted the well-deserved sentence with the silence which denotes the perfection of their resignation–their only word is full of simple faith. There was no child on whom to set their hopes, nor would the true Seed be born for many an age. Still Eve is to be the mother of all living and Adam calls her so.

Exercise like faith, my Brothers and Sisters, on the far wider Revelation which God has given to you and always extract the utmost comfort from it! Make a point, whenever you receive a promise from God, to get all you can out of it. If you carry out that rule, it is wonderful what comfort you will gain! Some go on the principle of getting as little as possible out of God's Word. I believe that such a plan is the proper way with a man's word–always understand it at the minimum, because that is what he means–but God's Word is to be understood at the maximum, for He will do exceedingly abundantly above what you ask or even think!

Notice by way of further encouragement that we may regard our reception of Christ's righteousness as an installment of the final overthrow of the devil. The 21 st verse says, "Unto Adam, also, and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skinsand clothed them." A very condescending, thoughtful and instructive deed of Divine Love! God heard what Adam said to his wife, and so He comes and gives Him the type of the perfect righteousness, which is the Believer's portion–He covered him with lasting raiment. No more

fig leaves, which were a mere mockery, but a close-fitting garment which had been procured through the death of a victim.

The Lord brings that and puts it on him and Adam could no more say, “I am naked.” How could he, for God had clothed him! Now, Beloved, let us take out of the promise that is given us concerning our Lord’s conquest over the devil this one item and rejoice in it! Christ has delivered us from the power of the serpent, who opened our eyes and told us we were naked, by covering us from head to foot with a righteousness which adorns and protects us so that we are comfortable in heart, beautiful in the sight of God and are no more ashamed!

Next, by way of encouragement in pursuing the Christian life, I would say to young people–expect to be assailed. If you have fallen into trouble through being a Christian, be encouraged by it! Do not at all regret or fear it, but rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for this is the constant token of the Covenant! There is still enmity between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent–and if you did not experience any of it, you might begin to fear that you were on the wrong side! Now that you smart under the sneer of sarcasm and oppression, rejoice and triumph, for now are you partakers with the glorious Seed of the woman in the bruising of His heel.

Still further encouragement comes from this. Your suffering as a Christian is not brought upon you for your own sake–you are

partners with the great Seed of the woman! You are confederates with Christ! You must not think the devil cares much about you–the battle is against Christ in you. Why, if you were not in Christ, the devil would never trouble you! When you were without Christ in the world you might have sinned as you like. Your relatives and work-mates would not have been at all grieved with you–they would rather have joined you in it! But now the serpent's seed hates Christ in you. This exalts the sufferings of persecution to a position far above all common afflictions!

I have heard of a woman who was condemned to death, in the Marian days, and before her time came to be burned, a child was born to her and she cried out in her sorrow. A wicked adversary, who stood by, said, "How will you bear to die for your religion if you make such ado?" "Ah," she said, "Now I suffer in my own person as a woman, but then I shall not suffer, but Christ in me." Nor were these idle words, for she bore her martyrdom with exemplary patience and rose in her chariot of fire in holy triumph to Heaven! If Christ is in you, nothing will dismay you, but you will overcome the world, the flesh and the devil by faith.

Last of all, let us always resist the devil with this belief, that he has received a broken head. I am inclined to think that Luther's way of laughing at the devil was a very good one, for Satan is worthy of shame and everlasting contempt. Luther once threw an inkstand at his head when he was tempting him very sorely, and

though the act, itself, appears absurd enough, yet it was a true type of what that great Reformer was all his life long, for the books he wrote were truly a flinging of the inkstand at the head of the fiend! That is what we have to do–we are to resist him by all means. Let us do this bravely and tell him to his teeth that we are not afraid of him.

Tell him to remember his bruised head, which he tries to cover with a crown of pride, or with a popish hood, or with an infidel doctor's hood. We know him and see the deadly wound he bears. His power is gone! He is fighting a lost battle! He is contending against Omnipotence! He has set himself against the oath of the Father, against the blood of the Incarnate Son! He dares to set himself against the eternal power and Godhead of the blessed Spirit, all of which are engaged in the defense of the Seed of the woman in the day of battle!

Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, be steadfast in resisting the Evil One, being strong in faith, giving glory to God–

"'Tis by Your blood, immortal Lamb,
Your armies tread the tempter down!
'Tis by Your Word and powerful name.
They gain the battle and renown.
Rejoice you heavens! Let every star
Shine with new glories round the sky:
Saints, while you sing the heavenly war,

Raise your Deliverer's name on high."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON–Genesis 3.HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"–335, 477, 322.

Ge 3:18 • Thorns and Thistles

SERMON 2299

T*horns And Thistles*

"Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to you."

Genesis 3:18

THIS was not the penalty which might have been pronounced upon Adam. This curse does not fall directly on him–it glances obliquely and falls upon the ground whereon he stands–"Cursed is the ground for your sake." It is not from materialism that a curse comes upon the spirit of man, but it is from the erring spirit that the curse falls upon the material creation. Let us notice this and learn from it the infinite mercy of God, in that, while the curse falls upon the serpent distinctly, and his head is bruised, yet upon Adam it comes, as I have said, obliquely. "Cursed is the ground for your

sake." "Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to you." God, in His justice, never goes beyond justice even in pronouncing His severest sentence, but here, in this life, He tempers His justice with great patience and long-suffering, "Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Another thing is very noticeable, that though the ground was now to bear thorns and thistles to Adam, yet he was to be above ground and alive to till it. Had the sentence been carried out to the fullest, a yawning grave would have opened at his feet and there would have been no more of Adam–but he was permitted, still, to live. Now, whenever thorns and thistles spring up about your path, do not murmur. "Why does a living man complain?" When a felon lies in the dungeon and the sentence of death has been passed upon him, if his life is spared, he may be quite content to live on bread and water for the rest of his days. Thank God that you are not in Hell! Thank God that life is still prolonged to you! You are on praying ground and pleading terms with God, even though that ground may bring forth thorns and thistles to you. "He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." We are still spared. And though there are thorns and thistles springing up around us, still, that is a light punishment compared with what we really deserve to suffer.

And, then, notice one thing more, how sweetness can be extracted from that which is sour. If the ground was to bring forth thorns and

thistles to Adam, then he was still to live. Not only was he alive, but he was still to live on, for the Lord added, "And you shall eat the herb of the field." Although the sentence took away from Adam the luscious fruits of Paradise, yet it secured him a livelihood. He was to live–the ground was to bring forth enough of the herb of the field for him to continue to exist. Albeit that henceforth all he ate was to be with the sweat of his face, yet he was to have enough to eat, and he was to live on. Thorns and thistles might multiply, but there would be the herb of the field for him, and he would be spared. The promises of God are often veiled by His threats and if faith can only look beneath the rough covering of the message, something cheerful and hopeful may be found within.

Brothers and Sisters, you will have trials! Thorns, also, and thistles shall the ground bring forth to you, but your bread shall be given you, your waters shall be sure! You have been provided for until now, notwithstanding many straits and trials, and it shall be so to the end. The manna shall not cease till you eat the old corn of Canaan. Till you need no more, God will not cease to feed you all your life. So, if the text, tonight, shall sound somewhat gloomy, and you expect a very thorny and thistly sermon, yet I trust that there will be much to cheer and comfort those of you who have found it true in your experience–"Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to you."

I should like to say to those here who have their portion in this life, that it is not much of a portion. Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to you and, if this is all you have, you have a very poor pittance to live upon–

"There is beyond the sky
A Heaven of joy and love,"

but beneath the sky there is no such Heaven! Even for the godly there are thorns and thistles, but for you who are not godly, thorns and thistles are all that you have! If you have no heritage on the other side of Jordan, in the land of the hereafter, in the dwelling place of the blessed, it were better for you that you had never been born! Notwithstanding all the transient delights that you now possess, they will only be as the crackling of thorns under a pot, soon over, and nothing but a handful of ashes left in everlasting darkness. Oh, that you would learn from this not to set your affection upon things below, but to be looking for a better and a brighter land, where the thorn never grows, and the thistle never springs up!

But now let us come to the handling of our text, thorny though it may seem to be.

And, first, A GENERAL FACT is here stated. This fact we will consider. Ever since that first sin of our first parents, this has been generally true of the whole human race, not only of the earth,

literally, but of everything else round about us, “Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to you.”

It is so with regard to the natural world. This world is full of beauty; it is full of light; it yields a thousand pleasures; but still, it is full of terror. There is much, indeed, to distress the frail mortals who live in this world. Have you ever been to sea in a storm? Have you not felt as if Nature were at war with you then? Have you never been on the land in some tremendous thunderstorm, when the whole earth seemed to shake, and the skies were split with the fiery bolts? Ah, then you have felt that this world is not quite a paradise since man has become a sinner! The stars of Heaven do not fight for him, but they sometimes fight against him. There are many things in this world, with its stern laws, that make it a place that has not all the comfort that a creature might wish. He is a sinful creature and although he does not suffer all the discomfort that he deserves, yet this world is changed from what it was when God placed Adam in it to delight himself in Paradise!

As it is in the natural world, so it is in the social world. You go out into the wide world of trade and business and I think you find that thorns, also, and thistles does it bring forth to you. You do not have a week’s dealing, a week’s work, a week’s going to and fro in this world without getting a pricking thorn here and there. If we do not all have to complain of this experience, I think we who are Christians will all admit that the world is not congenial to a

believing man or woman. The society of the world is not helpful to a holy heart. To have to mix in it is rather a task for which we need much Grace, as we cry, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." You cannot have much to do with the men of the world without finding that many of them are sharper than a thorn hedge–and you cannot go to and fro in the earth without discovering that you are surrounded by those who make thorns and thistles to grow up all around you. Be not surprised when this is the case, for it is only what your Lord foretold–"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

It is the same, also, in the religious world. We read, in the Book of Hosea, that they turned aside from God and set up altars. And afterwards it is said, "The thorns and the thistles shall come up on their altars." The worst thorns and thistles that ever wound my heart are those that grow in religious circles. To see God's Truth dishonored, to have the Glory of Christ's Substitution denied, to hear doctrines preached which would be novel if they were not old errors newly vamped and brought forth from the oblivion in which they deserved to rot–and to see Christian people behave themselves as some of them do, having little respect to the name of Him whom they profess to serve, and bringing discredit on the Sacred cause for

which they ought to be willing to die rather than to cast a slur upon it–these are thorns and thistles that pierce us to the very heart! You can neither live in the Church nor live in the world without finding that this present state of life brings forth thorns and thistles to men, yes, to Christian men, too! Not only to the first Adam and to his seed, but to the second Adam and to His seed, this present state has this as one of its certain characteristics, "Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to you."

I will go a little further, and tread upon delicate ground. I am afraid that there are many of you who have felt that, even in the little family world in which you move, you are not left without trials. God, when he took away Paradise as our home, gave us home to be our paradise! And if there is a place where all happiness is to be found, it is around the family hearth. "East and west, home is best." "There is no place like home." Yet where is there a home without affliction? The dear child whom you love, sickens and dies. Perhaps the wife or the husband may be taken away to the long home; or poverty comes in; or one whom you love dearer than yourself pines daily with constant sickness and frequent agony. No, we must not expect perfect peace, perfect happiness even in the home which is blessed with morning and evening prayer, where God locks up the door at night and draws the curtains in the morning–no, not even there, my dear Friends, shall we be free from the curse that sin brought into this fair world. Still will this word

follow us into the sacred precincts of our own dwellings, “Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to you.”

And it is so if you get a little closer home, still, to the microcosm or little world of your own self. There is no part of man which does not yield him its thorns. Many of us have a thorn in the flesh. Is there any part of the body which may not, if God so wills it, become the subject of disease and, consequently, the source of pain to us? I know some whom God dearly loves–I know He loves them, for He favors them very highly–who, nevertheless, find that in the body of this flesh there are the seeds of corruption. There are the bitter wells of Marah by reason of sharp pain of body and, as to the mind, itself, what mind is there that is full of faith and most joyful in the Lord which is not naturally, still, the subject of grief? There will come times of depression, seasons of apprehension, nights when the Light of God’s Countenance is withdrawn, or when, though we know that we possess the love of God, it is not shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit to the same extent as in our brighter hours. Yes, and even in the soul, itself, by reason of the imperfection of our sanctification, from the fact that we are not so filled by the Spirit, and not so conscious of the abiding of the Spirit within us as we yet shall be, thorns, also, and thistles are brought forth to us.

I may be speaking to some who can say, with an emphasis, that they oftentimes find great crops of thistles springing up in their

hearts. And they have to keep the sickle of sacred mortification going to cut them down and they try, if possible, to dig them up by the roots. But thus it is–you cannot expect a perfect life of happiness in an imperfect world like this. No, your Savior carried the Cross, and you will have a cross of some kind or other to carry after Him. "Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to you."

Now, still dwelling on this dreary fact, as we have it foretold in the text, let us learn from the text, itself, first, that trials will come spontaneously. Nobody is so foolish as to sow thorns and thistles. I have often wondered who that great fool must have been, who, being a Scotchman, desired to see the old Scotch thistle growing up in New Zealand and, therefore, sent a packet of seed out there to poison, with his precious thistle, that land where there were none before! I think the man who would venture to sow even one seed of a thistle in such a world as this, where thistles grow quite plentifully enough, must have gone a long way in folly. But if, dear Friend, you never cause trouble to others and do nothing that can bring trouble to yourself–and you will be a wonderfully wise man if that is the case–still, troubles will come of themselves! If you need a herb of the field that you are to feed upon, you must sow it. Your wheat and your barley, you must sow with care. As to the thorns and thistles, you need not take any trouble about sowing them–they will spring up of themselves spontaneously–and so will

the afflictions and tribulations of this life come to you without any effort on your part!

And, as they come spontaneously, so trials will come unavoidably. I care not how careful a man may be with his farm–he will find thorns and thistles springing up and needing to be destroyed! He may have plowed and harrowed, and done his best to get rid of every thistle in autumn before it has seeded, and yet he cannot keep the troublesome things out–they will be sure to come. So you may rest assured that troubles of heart, and troubles of body, and troubles of mind will come to you, watch and guard against them as you may! All the prudence and care, yes, and all the prayer and faith that you can summon to your help, will not keep you clear of these thorns and thistles. As they are spontaneous, so are they unavoidable.

To many, also, trials are very abundant. "Thorns, also, and thistles"–not a thorn and a thistle–but thorns and thistles, and plenty of them, shall it bring forth to you. If any of you are vexed with trial after trial, I pray you do not think it a strange thing–you are not at all alone in such an experience. Many of you, because of your troubles, will get alone, and say, "I am the man that has seen affliction." Stop! I can find you another man who can equal you, and many women who can surpass you in their afflictions! The path of sorrow is trodden by thousands of feet–it is hard with traffic–but as it leads to the eternal Kingdom when a Believer's

foot is upon it–we need only rejoice to follow the footsteps of the flock and look upon our trials as the tokens that we are where the great Shepherd leads us. Thus we sing–

"Is this, dear Lord, that thorny road
Which leads us to the mount of God?
Are these the toils Your people know,
'Tis even so, Your faithful love
Does thus Your children's Graces prove–
'Tis thus our pride and self must fall,
That Jesus may be All in All."

Thorns and thistles come abundantly–and trials come very variously. It is not only one form of trouble, but other forms, also–"Thorns, also, and thistles." You may think that it is bad enough to be ill, yourself, but to be poor as well, to also have a sick child and to be assailed by a slanderous enemy, seems more than you can bear! Ah, well, you are to expect these things! If you had only one form of trouble, perhaps you would grow used to it and, therefore, it might lose its effect. It is the very fact that it wounds that makes it useful to us! Solomon says, "By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." No tribulation for the present is joyous–if it were, it would not be tribulation at all! If the rod does not make the child smart, what is the use of it? And if our troubles do not make us grieve, why, then, they are not troubles, and there is no room for Divine Grace to support us under them!

We may expect to have trials of every sort and size, for they attend the followers of the Lamb as long as they are in the world that lies under this curse. “Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to you.”

I think that, without straining the text, I may say that trials will come very frequently, for thorns and thistles seem to spring up very early in the morning, and very early in the spring, and very late in the autumn, and even far into the winter! When is there a time when a man in this world, yes, a Christian, too, can be sure that he will be perfectly free from trouble?

And trials come universally. I have seen thorns and thistles on the tops of the Surrey Hills, growing by myriads, enough to seed a kingdom with them! And if you go down into the valley, into the poor man’s little plot of ground, you will find thorns and thistles there. They grow in the gardens of Windsor Castle as well as in the backyard of your lodging house. Thorns, also, and thistles grow anywhere–on dunghills or in conservatories! They seem to be universally scattered! The downy wings carry the thistle seed everywhere and it springs up in most unlikely places. If you think that other people are to be envied because of their freedom from trial, it is possible that if you knew more about them, you would find that they were to be pitied, and that your lot, after all, is much better than theirs!

Now, I am not going to say any more about this general fact, a fact which I suppose most of you know quite as well as I do, that thorns and thistles, trials and troubles, abound in this sin-cursed world.

II. But now, in the second place, THIS FACT HAS TO BE FACED–"Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to you."

Now know this, you Christian people, especially, know this, and then it will prevent disappointments. If you begin your Christian life imagining that because you are a Christian, everything is to go smoothly with you and that you are henceforth never to have any more troubles, you will be bitterly disappointed when the thorns and thistles begin to spring up! Expect them! Look forward to them and then, when they do come, half of their sting will be gone! You will say, "Well, when I took this farm, I knew that thorns and thistles would spring up, I calculated upon seeing them. Now that they have come up, to be forewarned is, in a great measure, to be forearmed–I shall not sit down and weep with bitter disappointment, for what I suffer is no more than I expected."

In the next place, the knowledge of this fact will awaken gratitude. If you have not a little lot of thorns and thistles, be thankful that you have not. And if you are saying to yourself, "Well, I trust that I am a Christian, but really, I have not any very great trouble. I seem to sail on a mill pond, everything goes smoothly with me." Thank God for it. It should tend to make you

grateful if there is no bitter in your cup, when you might have expected that there would be. Then drink the sweet with gratitude and pour out a portion for the poor–and have sympathy with others who are not as favored in this respect as you are! This fact should arouse your gratitude.

In the next place, being forewarned that there will be thorns and thistles, should brace up your soul to expect them. The finest men in all the world are not to be found in the warm, genial climates, where the earth has only to be tickled with a hoe and it laughs with plenty! The strongest and the most enterprising spirits have been found at the back of the north wind, where there are frosts and ice, and long, dreary winters, and men have a hard struggle for a livelihood. They become real men under that stern training! Now, if there were no thorns and thistles, no struggles and no trials, should we have any brave Christians? Should we have any great and noble souls at all? When did the Church yield her best men of Christ! These are silken days and we have wretched specimens of Christians everywhere–but if the times of persecution were to come, once more, with the rough winds blowing, and the whole sea of the world tossed in tempest, we should then find brave sailors who would put the ship's head to the wind and ride safely over the stormy billows in the name of the Eternal God! It is, perhaps, the worst thing that can happen to us to be without any kind of trouble. We do not grow in Grace very quickly without trial–and we do not,

then, develop the Graces of the Spirit as we do when God sends the thorns and thistles to grow up around us.

Further, dear Friends, the knowledge that we may expect the thorns and the thistles should prevent our clinging to this world. I should not always want to stay here, when all that I have as a warranty of this farm is this–"Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to you." There is a land–

"Where everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers."

Oh, let my heart be set upon the world to come! Let me cheer my soul with the prospect of being forever with the Lord, where nothing can distress or annoy my glorified spirit forever! The Lord does not mean Believers to be satisfied with this world. If you are His child, however fair your portion here, He means you to be always restless until you rest in Him and never to be fully satisfied until you wake up in His likeness. Therefore, be thankful for the thorns and thistles which keep you from being in love with this world and becoming an idolater as so many of your fellow men are.

Does not the Lord intend, by these trials and troubles, to bring us to seek after higher things? Brethren, are there not many men who would have been lost if they had not lost their all? I talked with one, the other day, who said to me, "I never saw until I lost my eyes." Another said to me, as I noticed that he had lost a leg, "Ah, Sir, it was the loss of that leg that made me think and brought me to

my Savior's feet!" Some of you cannot go to Heaven with all your possessions and with all your prosperity! It will be necessary to have these things cut away. You are like a ship that is going down through overloading and you will have to be unloaded that you may float–and blessed is that hand of God which unloads you of many an earthly joy, that you may find your all in the world to come!

Affliction is God's black dog that He sends after wandering sheep to bring them back to the fold! If that dog is after anyone here, tonight, I pray you, fly away to the Shepherd! Do not begin fighting the dog and trying to struggle with him, for you will get nothing by that, but run away to the Shepherd! One of these days you will be glad for all the rough treatment that the black dog gave you in the day of your tribulation. Thorns and thistles shall the earth bring forth to you, but if these bring you nearer to your God, they are the best crop the ground can grow! Remember what we sang just now–

"God in Israel sows the seeds
Of affliction, pain, and toil.
These spring up and choke the weeds
Which would else overspread the soil!
Trials make the promise sweet.
Trials give new life to prayer.
Trials bring me to His feet,
Lay me low and keep me there."

Once more, these thorns and thistles should make us look to Christ to change all things around us. The world will always go on bringing forth thorns and thistles until HE comes–and when He comes, our Glory and Delight–then, “instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree.” Only His Grace and His own glorious Presence can change this visible creation, as it shall be changed when, “the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock.” We look for that happy transformation, but as for moral transformations, they take place every day where Jesus comes! He constantly turns thorns and thistles into fir trees and myrtle trees. He makes what was our sorrow to become the base of sweet content and out of all our griefs we gather gladness, blessed be His name!

If any of you say that this is a dreary subject, I want you to remember how much more dreary it was to Him than it ever can be to you, for when He was crowned on earth, the only crown He ever wore was a crown of thorns! This curse of the earth was on His head and wounded Him sorely. Was He crowned with thorns and do you wonder that they grow up around your feet? Rather bless Him that ever He should have consecrated the thorns by wearing them for His diadem! Be willing to wear the thorn crown, too, and if that is not given you to prick your temples, and to make every thought an agony, be satisfied to go on treading a thorny path, for

your Lord has been that way before. The day shall come when all these thorns will make us sing more sweetly! The special music of some of the redeemed is due to their special trials–

"The deeper their sorrows, the louder they'll sing."

The transports of Heaven will reach a height in those who have passed through great afflictions which they cannot attain otherwise. "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the Throne of God and serve Him day and night in His Temple." Therefore, be not sorry that the earth shall bring forth thorns and thistles to you, for without these you could not come through these great tribulations and enter into so great and glorious a rest!

I have ended sooner, because of the Baptism which is to follow, but I would to God that some of you here, who have no portion in the world to come, would lay my text to heart. So you have come to London, young man, and you attend the theater, and music halls, and so on! Well, they will bring forth thorns and thistles to you. That is the kind of ground where they grow very large and with very sharp thorns on them. Oh, but you, my young Friend, do not go to such places–you are getting on nicely in business! Yes, but you have no guarantee that it will always be so. Thorns and thistles will it bring forth to you, as well as to others. And suppose that you should prosper? Suppose that you should make L10,000? Suppose

that you should make much more than that? Do you not know that with all that there will come great care, and that, after all, there is no satisfaction in it, and that when all that makes success in life is summed up, apart from laying hold of eternal things, it is all nothing but smoke? Thorns and thistles for dying beds are often made out of riches. There are more thorns and thistles to the rich than to the poor when they come to die, if they have lived an ill-spent life.

Oh, Sirs, if you could have all the world, it would only be a bigger plot of thorns and thistles for you without Christ! But if you get Him, if Jesus is your portion, then if your trials should be heaped up as high as Heaven, you would not mind, for Christ would come and be with you in the worst of them–and you would still rejoice and glory in tribulation, also–and your tribulation would work in you patience, and patience, experience, and that experience would work in you the likeness of Christ, and so bring you nearer Heaven!

It matters not to the Believer what form his life may take when once Christ has become his life! And it will not matter much to you who are not saved what form your life takes if you continue without the Savior–it will be death all the same. And it will land you in eternal death!

Oh, God, grant that we may never settle down upon this thistle plot and try to make it to be our heritage, but may we find our

portion in the Lord Jesus Christ! I wish all of you that blessing, for His name’s sake. Amen.

Ge 4:6 • To Those Who are Angry with Their Godly Friends

SERMON 1929

T*o Those Who Are Angry With Their Godly Friends*

"And the Lord said unto Cain, Why are you angry? And why is your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And unto you shall be his desire and you shall rule over him."

Genesis 4:6, 7

SINNERS are not all of the laughing sort–Cain's mind was angry and his heart was heavy. The short life of the vicious is not always a merry one. See, here you have a man who is utterly without God, but he is not without sorrow. His countenance has fallen, his looks are sullen–he is a miserable man. There are many ungodly people still in the world who are not happy in the condition in which they

find themselves. The present does not content them and they have no future from which to borrow the light of hope. The service of sin is hard to them and yet they do not quit it for the service of the Lord. They are in danger of having two Hells–one in this life and another in the world to come!

They have a religion of their own, even as Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground, but it yields them no comfort, for God has no respect to their offering and, therefore, they are displeased about it. The things of God bring an increase to their inward wretchedness–it was after a sacrifice that Cain's countenance fell. Many unrenewed hearts quarrel with God at His own altar–quarrel by presenting what He never commanded and then by growing angry because He rejects their will-worship! They attend the means of Grace, but they are not saved nor comforted, and they do not like it. They pray, after a fashion, but they are not heard–and they feel indignant at the slight. They read the Scriptures, but no cheering promise is ever applied to their hearts–and they grow fierce at their failure. They see another accepted, as Abel was, and this excites their jealousy and envy gnaws at their heart. They are angry with God, with their fellow man and with everything about them! Their countenance falls and they are in a morose mood which fits them for any cruel word or deed. Can you not see their sullen looks?

They would very much like to have the enjoyments of religion. They would like to have peace of conscience. They would like to be uplifted beyond all fear of death and they would like to be as happy as Christian people are, but they do not want to pay the price, namely, obedience to God by faith in Jesus Christ! They would willingly bring an offering to God according to their own choice and taste, but they do not care to come with "the Lamb" as their Sacrifice–they cannot accept the Atonement made by our Lord's laying down His life for us. They wish to have the reward of obedient faith while yet they have their own way! They would reap the harvest without sowing the seed. They would gather clusters without planting vines. They would win the wages without serving the Master of the vineyard! But as this cannot be and never will be, they are full of bitter feeling. Since sin and sorrow are sure to be, sooner or later, married together–and since only by walking in the ways of God can we hope to find peace and rest–they quarrel with the Divine arrangement, grow inwardly miserable and show it by their sullen looks and growling words.

They are in a bitter state of heart and it is fair to ask each one of them, "Why are you angry?" Alas, they are not angry with themselves, as they ought to be, but angry with God–and often they are angry with God's chosen and envious of them–even as Cain was malicious and vindictive towards Abel. "Why should my neighbor be saved, and not I? Why should my brother rejoice

because he has peace with God while I cannot get it? Why should my own sister be converted and sing of Heaven and I, who have gone to the same place of worship and have joined in the same prayers and hymns, seem to be left out in the cold?" Such questions might be useful to them, but instead of looking into their own hearts to see what is wrong there–instead of judging themselves and trying to get right with God–they inwardly blame the Lord or the persons whom they think to be more favored than themselves! The blessings of Grace are to be had by them, but they refuse to take them and yet quarrel with those who accept them! They play the part of the dog in the manger, who could not eat the hay, himself, and would not let the horses do so. They will not accept Christ and yet grumble because others have Him.

It is one of the sure signs of the seed of the serpent–that they will always be at enmity with the Seed of the woman. This is one of the marks of distinction between those who walk after the flesh and those who walk after the spirit, for as Ishmael mocked Isaac, so the child of the flesh mocks the child of promise even to this day! As soon as the two sons born to Adam were grown up, the great division was seen–he who was of the Wicked One slew the man who, by faith, offered a more acceptable sacrifice. This division has never ceased and never will cease while the race of man remains on earth under the reign of God's long-suffering! By this shall you

know to which seed you belong–whether you are of those who hate the righteous, or of those who are hated for Christ's sake.

Now, I want to call attention to a very gracious fact connected with this text and that is, that although Cain was in such a bad temper that he was very angry and his countenance fell, yet God, the infinitely Gracious One, came and spoke with him and patiently reasoned with him. It is wonderful that God should speak with man at all, considering man's insignificance. Did not the Psalmist say, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?" But for the Lord to speak with sinful man is a far greater marvel! And for Him to reason with such a man as Cain, a murderer in heart and soon to be a murderer in deed–impenitent, implacable, presumptuous, blasphemous–this is a miracle of mercy! Shall the pure and holy God speak with such a wretch as Cain who was angry with his brother without just cause? Why does He not, at once, cut him off while yet his hate has not issued into murder–and thus at the very beginning show His detestation of envy and malice? Truly His mercy endures forever! Behold, the Lord comes to Cain with a question, gives him an opportunity of speaking for himself and defending, if he can, his state of mind. "Why are you angry? And why is your countenance fallen? If you do well, will

you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door."

Yet this is no solitary instance of the condescension of God–it is the way of our God to expostulate with sinners and to let them produce their strong reasons and justify themselves if they can. It is His fashion to say, "Turn you: turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel?" for He wills not the death of any, but that they should turn unto Him and live! He is greatly patient and waits to be gracious. God gives none up until they fatally resolve to give themselves up–and even then His good Spirit strives with them as long as it is possible to do so, consistently with His holiness.

Often to the very gates of death and up to the very edge of the bottomless Pit, His pity follows obstinate sinners, crying still, "Turn you! Turn you! Turn you! Why will you die?" Yes, the angry sinner–the Cain-ite sinner–the sinner whose face betrays the anger of his soul, whose heart is hot with enmity against God and against His Christ, even he is not left to die without Divine pleadings which may show him his fault and folly. Still does the Lord handle conscience with skill and awaken thought with fit enquiries–"Why are you angry? And why is your countenance fallen?"

I pray God that He may speak to any among my congregation who may be in this sad and evil condition. I have felt, lately, that I may have but few more opportunities of preaching the Gospel and, therefore, I would try and speak more solemnly every time I preach

and endeavor to strike right home at the heart and conscience, if, by any means, I may save some. Oh how I long to bring men to Jesus! I could gladly lay down my life to save my hearers. May the Holy Spirit make my words to be full of force and holy fire–and may they meet the case of some here present whom I have never seen before, but whose thoughts are as well known to God as if they were printed in a book and laid open before His eyes! Oh that I may be moved to speak a word which shall fit the case as a glove fits the hand which wears it! May it not merely be the voice of man that speaks to you, but may it be clear that God has commissioned His servant to speak to your hearts and that by my sermon, God, Himself expostulates with you even as He expostulated with Cain in those ancient times!

Remember that the case is that of a man who is angry–angry mainly because he cannot get the comforts of religion. He sees his brother enjoying them and he grows angry with him for that reason. With him and all like he, I would reason with kind words.

I shall take the last sentence of the text, first–"Unto you shall be his desire and you shall rule over him." In these words God argues with Cain and answers the charge of favoritism which was lurking in his mind. He tells him, in effect, that NO DIFFERENCE IS MADE IN THE ARRANGEMENT OF SOCIAL LIFE BECAUSE OF THE ARRANGEMENTS OF GRACE. Notice that He says to him, "Unto you shall be his desire and you shall rule over him"–

which I understand to mean just this, “Why are you so angry against Abel? It is true that I have accepted his offering–it is true that he is a righteous man and you are not, but, for all that, you are his elder brother and he looks up to you. His desire is toward you and you shall rule over him. He has not acted otherwise than as a younger brother should act towards an elder brother, but he has admitted your seniority and priority. He has not revolted from you. You rule over him–you are his master. Why, then, are you so angry?”

Observe this, then–that if a man shall be angry with his wife because she is a Christian, we may well argue with him–Why are you thus provoked? Is she not a loving and obedient wife to you in all things except in this matter touching her God? Is she not all the better for her religion? I have known a husband meet his wife at the Tabernacle door and call her foul names all the way home for no other reason than because she joined in the worship of God! Yet she was all the more loving, diligent and patient because of that worship. Here is your child converted and you are angry. Are you not unreasonable in this? You are his father and he yields obedience to you. God has not caused religion to alter the natural position of things–your child, your servant, your wife all recognize this–and remain in due subservience to you. For what cause are you thus sullen and angry? Good Sir, this is not like a reasonable man! Be persuaded to let better feelings sway you.

Now, this is an important thing to note because, first of all, it takes away from governments their excuse for persecution. In the early days of Christianity, multitudes of Christians were tormented to death because of their faith in Jesus. There was no excuse for it, for they had done no harm to the State. Christianity does not come into a nation to break up its arrangements, or to break down its fabric. All that is good in human society it preserves and establishes. It snaps no ties of the family; it dislocates no bonds of the body politic. There are theories of socialism and the like which lead to anarchy and riot, but it is not so with the mild and gentle teaching of Jesus Christ, whose every word is love and patience. He says, "Resist not evil, but whoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other, also." His Apostle says–"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands: husbands, love your wives; children, obey your parents in all things: servants, obey in all things your masters, not with eye service as men pleasers: masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that you, also, have a Master in Heaven." Such precepts as these are no injury to government.

Paul was no leader of sedition, no destroyer of the rights of property. Caesar needed not to fear Christ. Jesus did not covet Caesar's purple or Caesar's throne. Even Herod needed not to tremble for his princedom, for the Child that was born at Bethlehem would not have hunted that fox or disturbed his den.

“My Kingdom is not of this world,” said our Lord Jesus, “otherwise would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews.” Now, inasmuch as the religion of Jesus Christ does no hurt any social order, teaches no one to be rebellious, takes away from no man his rights, but guards the rights of all from the meanest to the greatest, all excuse is taken away from any government that dares to put out its hand to touch the Church of God! As to each disciple of Jesus, the government may be satisfied that he is loyal. “You shall rule over him” is certainly true. Christians will cheerfully submit to all lawful rule and righteous authority. To them it is a matter of joy if they are enabled to lead peaceable lives because the magistrate is a terror to evildoers.

They are a non-resistant, peaceable, quiet people, who have, from the beginning of the world until now, borne burdens and suffered and been content to suffer so that they might but be true to their Master. They hate tyranny, but they love order. They protest against oppression, but they uphold law and justice. Why, then, should they be persecuted? They ask nothing from the State by way of pay or patronage–they only ask to be left alone and to be subject to no disability on account of their religion. Let all who are in authority, whether as kings or petty magistrates, beware of wantonly molesting a people who cause them no trouble, lest they be found in this matter to be fighting against God!

That being so in the broad field of national life, it is just the same if you bring it down to the little sphere of home. There is no reason why Cain should be so angry with Abel because God loves him, for the love of God to Abel does not take away from Cain his right as an elder brother. It does not teach Abel to refuse to Cain the rights of his position, nor lead him to act rudely and wrongfully toward him. No, Abel's desire is unto Cain and Cain rules over him as his elder brother. Why, then, should Cain be angry and his countenance fall?

My dear Friend, if you are angry, tonight, about the Sovereignty of the Grace of God, as seen in the conversion of another, let me ask you what hurt has the Grace of God in the heart of the person you envy done to you? Is your eye evil because God's eye is good? Have you suffered in any sense because that other one is saved? You cannot have your way if you wish to coerce the envied one into giving up his faith–but have you a right to your own way? Is it not the privilege of every man to have his conscience left free to serve God alone? What right have you as an Englishman to take away liberty from another? You say, "Why, I think he is very stupid to believe as he does." Very likely you may think so, but then your judgment is given you for yourself, not for another, and you must not become a tyrant and domineer over others. I thought you were a stickler for liberty! And yet you sneer at others because they think for themselves, or at least do not think as you do! If religion made

men false in their dealings with others. If it made the servant careless and indifferent. If it made the husband a tyrant. If it made the wife a tattler and untidy and dirty. If it turned all relationships upsidedown–then there would be some little reasonableness in the opposition which you offer to it! But if it does nothing of the kind, why are you angry? And why is your countenance fallen?

Why, to me it seems to be a great blessing to a man to have his friends converted–a blessing to be desired and prized! Their conversion may do you good, even if you are not converted, yourself. Laban learned by experience that the Lord blessed him for Jacob's sake. Look at Joseph. The Lord was with him and we find that wherever Joseph went, others were the better because God blessed them through Joseph! A good man in a house is good store to the family. A converted daughter, a praying son, a holy husband, a gracious wife–why, these are the pillars, the ornaments, the buttresses of the house! Godly people hedge the mansion in with their prayers! Who can tell what blessings God gives to unconverted men because of their converted relatives? I do not doubt that, as sometimes the chaff is spared for the sake of the grain which it covers and protects, so, often, the lives of ungodly men are spared for the sake of the children whom they have to bring up–for the sake of those who have to be cherished by them for a while. Had it not been for the grief it would cause the mother whom you mock, the Lord might have cut you down, young man,

long ago! Pity for holy relatives may be the motive for the Lord's long-suffering to many rebels. Therefore be not angry with the righteous.

I could hope, my angry friend, that God means to still give a greater blessing to you–that He means to entice you to Heaven by showing your wife the way, or He means to lead you to Christ by that dear child of yours. I have known parents brought to repentance by the deaths of daughters or of sons who have died in the faith. I hope you will not have to lose those you love that you may be brought to Jesus by their dying words. But it may be so–it may be so. It will be better for you to yield to their gentle example while yet they are spared, than for you to be smitten to the heart by their sickness and death. Oh that the persecuted one may live to have the great joy of going to the House of God with his Father, or walking with brother in the ways of godliness, or bringing the thoughtless sister to seek and find the Savior! Why should it not be so? Let us hope for it!

At any rate, I do not see any cause to be angry because Grace has visited your family. To say the very least about it, a man who is angry with another for enjoying a religion which he, himself, does not care for, is a poor specimen of good nature! Surely he may allow others to enjoy what he does not, himself, desire. If you do not wish for salvation, why worry yourself because others possess it? If you do not mean to serve Christ, at least stand out of the way

and let other people serve Him. There cannot be any gain to you in kicking against the pricks, by resisting the power of Divine Grace! You will find it hard work in the long run, for the Lord has said that if any shall offend one of the least of His little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hung about his neck and that he were cast into the midst of the sea! For prudence's sake, for your own sake, for reason's sake, for freedom's sake, I pray you be no longer angry and let not your countenance fall! If we cannot agree in matters of religion, let us not persecute or think contemptuously of one another.

II. Now let us advance farther into the text. There is no room for being angry, for THOUGH THE DIFFERENCE LIES FIRST WITH THE GRACE OF GOD, YET IT LIES, ALSO, WITH THE MAN'S OWN SELF. "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door."

First, then, if you are not accepted and you are angry because you are not accepted, is there not a just cause for it? If you do not enjoy the comforts of religion and you grow envious because you do not, you should cool your wrathfulness by considering this question–"If you do well, will you not be accepted?" That is to say, will you not be accepted on the same terms as Abel? You will be accepted in the same way as your brother, your sister, your child. How is it that the one you envy is full of peace? It is because he has come to Jesus and confessed his sin and trusted his Redeemer. If you do this, shall

not you, also, be accepted? Has not the Lord said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”? If you, too, come and confess your sin and trust the Savior, you are as certain to be accepted as your friend. You are envious because another is full of joy. Where did that joy come from but from this–that he came according to the Divine command and rested himself upon the finished work of Christ and gave himself up to be Christ’s servant–and asked for the Holy Spirit to renew him and lead him into the way of righteousness?

That has been done according to the faithful promise of God which is sure to all who obey the Gospel command. If you come in the same way and rest on the same Savior and yield yourself up to be renewed by the same Spirit, the Lord will not refuse you! Put it to the test and see. Try Him. Try Him and if He refuses you, let me know, for I am telling everybody that Jesus never casts out any that come to Him–and I must not do so any more if I find out that He does reject you or anyone else! Come to Jesus confessing your sin and trusting in Him and if He does not save you, let me know, and I will publish it to the four winds of Heaven! We shall be bound to make it known that Christ has broken His Word and that His Gospel has become of no effect, for we must, on no account, cry up a falsehood and lead our fellow men to believe that which is not true! Try the Lord Jesus, I beseech you, and I know what the result will be! You shall find that the gate of mercy stands wide open for

you and that you will be received as well as others. There is no difference in this matter–whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved! Whoever will, may take of the Water of Life freely!

Now, is it not much wiser for a man, instead of being angry with another's enjoying the comforts of religion, to seek to enjoy them himself? Am I hungry–and angry with another because he has eaten a good meal when the same bread stands before me? Then I am foolish and cross-grained! Do I see another refreshed at the fountain and do I stand at the freely flowing stream and complain? Do I bitterly demand why his lips are moistened while my mouth is dried up like an oven? What is the use of being angry with the neighbor who has quenched his thirst when the same fountain is free to me? O murmuring Friend, why do you not, yourself, believe? Stoop and drink as your friend has done and you shall be refreshed as he has been!

If you do well–that is, if you are obedient to the precious Word of the Gospel–will you not be accepted? "No," says one, "I am afraid that I shall not be." Who told you so? Your fear is without scriptural foundation. "But perhaps my name is not written in the Book of Life." Who told you so? Who has climbed up to the secret chamber of God to read the mystic roll? Who dares to tell you that your name is not there? Who knows anything about the secret purposes of God? I venture to tell you this–that if you believe in Jesus Christ, be you who you may, your name is written in the

Lamb's Book of Life! "Him that comes to Me," He says, "I will in no wise cast out." Any "him" that comes in all the world, while time shall last, if he does but come to Christ, Christ has said that He cannot and will not cast him out! Therefore, come, and you shall find Grace in His sight! Instead of being angry with another for believing and rejoicing, taste, for yourself, the joys which faith secures. May infinite Grace lead you to do so now!

God's second word with Cain was, however, "If you do not do well, sin lies at the door." That is to say, "If religion does not yield you joy as it does your brother, what is the reason? Surely sin blocks the entrance, as a stone blocking the doorway. If you cannot gain an entrance to mercy, it is because sin, like a huge stone, has been rolled against it, and remains there. If the way to God and salvation is, indeed, blocked up, it is only blocked up by your own sin! The door is not locked by a Divine decree, nor nailed up by any necessity of circumstances, nor barred by any peculiarity of your case. No, there is neither block, nor bar, nor lock except your sin. Your sin lies at the door and makes you a prisoner, where, otherwise, you might be free as air! I desire to press this point home upon any unconverted persons who are somewhat anxious, but yet cannot get peace. A secret something is keeping you from being accepted as Abel was accepted. I am sure it is sin in one shape or another. I entreat you to see what that sin is!

Is it unbelief? In most cases unbelief is the damning sin. You will not believe God's Word. You reject the testimony of God concerning His Son Jesus and thus you put away from you eternal life. You say, "I cannot believe." But that will not do, for you know that God is true and if God is true, how dare you say that you cannot believe Him? If, when I stated solemnly a fact, you told me, "I cannot believe you," I should understand you to mean that I am a liar. And when you say, "I cannot believe God," do you not know that the English of such an expression is this–you make God a liar by refusing to believe on His Son? This unbelief is sin enough–sin enough to destroy you forever! What higher offense can there be against any man, much more against God, than to accuse Him of a lie? Every person here who does not now believe in Jesus Christ is guilty of the high profanity and infinite blasphemy of making the Almighty God a liar! This is the huge stone which lies at the door. May God help you to roll it away, by saying, "I will believe; I must believe. God must be true; the blood of His dear Son must be able to wash away sin. I will trust in it now!"

Possibly, however, another form of the same stone of sin lies at your door and keeps you back. Is it impenitence? Are you hardened about your sin? Do you refuse to quit it? Is there no sorrow in your heart to think that you have broken the Divine Law and have lived forgetful of your God? A hard heart is a great stone to lie in a man's way, for he who will not acknowledge his sin and forsake it is

wedded to his own destruction! May God soften your heart and help you, at once, to repent of sin!

Or, is it pride? Are you too big a man to become a Christian? Are you too respectable, too wealthy, too polite? Are you too deep a thinker? Do you know too much? You could not go and sit down with the humble people who, like little children, believe what God tells them. No, no–you have too much brain for that, have you? Now be honest and admit it. You read the reviews and you like a little dash of skepticism in your literature. You could not possibly listen to Jesus when He says, "Except you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." You do not care for such old-fashioned doctrine, for you are too much of a philosopher! Well, I have heard of a Spanish monarch who perished through etiquette–there was too much fire in the grate and it was not according to state for His Majesty to pull his chair back from the fire. And so he became over-heated and died in consequence. I would not care to lose my soul to gratify my loftiness! Would you? One's pride may carry him far if he is a great fool, but let him not suffer his pride to carry him into Hell, for it certainly will never carry him out, again!

Alas, there are some who have another sin, a hidden sin. I cannot mention it. It is a shame, even, to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. I have been frequently puzzled to know why certain persons cannot attain peace. Do what we may with

them, they appear to have a tide of disquiet forever ebbing and flowing and casting up mire and dirt. They have seemed to be in a fair way to salvation and yet they have never reached it–they have been one day near and the next far off! In one or two instances I have not discovered the reason why the Gospel never succeeded with them till they were dead. When they were gone, the sad truth was revealed which accounted for all their uneasiness–but I will not tell you what it was. There was a secret which, if it had been known, would have made their character abhorrent to those who, in ignorance, respected them!

Does any man here carry about with him a guilty secret? Does he persevere in shameful acts which he labors to conceal? How can a man hope for peace while he wars with the laws of morality? What rest can there be while solemn vows are broken and the purest of relationships are treated with despite? No, while there is any uncleanness about a man, or about a woman, there cannot be peace with God–such sins must be given up or there cannot be acceptance with the Most High. Would you, for a moment, insinuate that the Lord Jesus died to allow you to sin and yet escape its penalty?

We have known persons practice dishonesty in business and this has shut them out from acceptance. Not that they actually pilfer, but they have ways and means of calling things by wrong names and taking fraudulent advantage. Cheating is called, “custom of trade,” and so on. I could not tell why the Lord did not accept

certain people when they appeared to be seeking mercy. I understand it now. How can the Lord be gracious to one who continues in dishonesty? Will He choose thieves to be His friends? If He will take thieves and make them honest–they shall enter His kingdom–but if we abide in transgression of any sort when it is known to us, we cannot expect to be accepted! My Brothers and Sisters, to be very plain with you, an honest heart and an honest hand must be found in every man who is to be justified at the Last Great Day.

Some cannot get peace because they neglect prayer. They do not ask, or seek or knock–and so they do not receive, they cannot find and the door of Grace is not opened to them. Oh, how can you think that God accepts you when you live day after day without prayer?

Not a few harbor enmity in their hearts towards their brother or neighbor. O angry Hearer, God cannot accept your sacrifice until you are at peace with your brother! It cannot be. He might as well have pressed Cain to His bosom as you, for he that hates his brother abides in death! “You know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” Go home and be reconciled. Go home and forgive your fellow servant, for if you do not so forgive your little debts, the great Lord will not forgive you all your great debt! Before you can hope to have peace with God, you must be at peace with those who have offended you.

Then there are some who keep evil company. They like to come to the Tabernacle, or to some other place where the Gospel is preached, and they hope that they may find Christ–but then they also like a lascivious song. They relish those silly, coarse, loathsome ditties which have a touch of "smut" about them. These are disgraceful things and yet certain people roll them out as choice morsels! While that is the case, can a man hope that God will accept him? No! It is of no use pretending anything of the kind! You and your sins must part, or God and you cannot be friends. God will accept us and receive us as penitent sinners, but not so long as we open the back door for the devil and enthrone him in our heart of hearts. If you are not accepted, sin lies at the door and shuts you out of present rest and peace, even as it will ultimately shut you out of Heaven!

I think this word of Divine expostulation bears another meaning. "If you do not do well, sin lies at the door." That is to say, not only as a stone to block your way, but as a lion to pounce upon you. It is true that sin is hindering you from peace, but it is also true that a greater sin is lurking at the door ready to spring upon you. What a warning this word ought to have been to Cain! If you are doing evil and God is not accepting you– and that fact is making you angry– there is a worse sin lying like a lion ready to devour you! It was so with Cain. Perhaps at that moment he had not seriously thought of killing his brother. He was angry, but he was not yet implacable

and malicious. But God said, “There is a sin lying at your door that will come upon you to your destruction.” May it not be the same with you, my Hearer? What if I were to look steadily in the face of some undecided person here, tonight, and say, “Friend, are you not accepted by God and are you angry? A sin is lying at your door which will be your ruin. You will go on from being a sinner to become a criminal.” Is Hazael here? Shall I, like the Prophet, look you in the face till my tears begin to flow at the sight of you, and say, “I know what you will do. You will be a terror to all around you”? You would probably answer me as Hazael did–“Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?”

Many a man would be horrified to be told what yet will be the fact in his case. Dreadful to tell, men that have been melted by a sermon have afterwards grown hard enough to perpetrate crimes that have brought them before the courts of their country! Almost converted, almost persuaded, it looked as if a vista opened up before them leading to endless glory and happiness–but in one sad hour they turned the other way. Like Felix, they waited for a more convenient season and their life was, from that day on, down, down, deeper and deeper and deeper–till it ended in the lowest Hell. Oh, my dear Hearers, I am always fearful about those who are so near salvation and yet are not decided! Judas, who can preach the Gospel. Judas, who is an Apostle. Judas, who can say, “Lord, is it I?”–He is the man that at the last sells his Master! Though an

Apostle in appearance, he was in heart a traitor and a son of perdition! The raw material for a devil is an angel! The raw material for the son of perdition was an Apostle–and the raw material for the most horrible of apostates is one who is almost a saint!

I say no more than I mean and than history can prove. There have usually been splendid traits of character about men who have been unfit to live. The question has been in their minds, "Which shall have the mastery?" and, for a while, the result has trembled in the balance! But when they have decided for evil, it has been decision with a vengeance. God gave Cain the clearest warning. He did as good as say–"Why are you angry? And why is your countenance fallen? There is an opportunity for you. If you do well, shall not you, even you, O Cain, be accepted? And if you do evil, sin lies at the door to spring upon you and drag you down." Oh that he had been capable of taking the warning and escaping the evil! Be you warned, O man or woman to whom these words shall come, lest your last end be worse than the first!

But there is yet another meaning which I must bring out, here, and that is one which is held by many critics, though it is questioned by others. I am content to go with a considerable following, especially of the old divines, who say that the word here used may be rendered, "If you do evil, a sin offering lies at the door." And what a sweet meaning this gives us! God graciously

declares to angry Cain, “You can bring a sin offering, as Abel has done, and all will be well. You can present a bleeding sacrifice, typical of the great Atonement–a sin offering lies at the door.” This should be an encouraging assurance to anyone who is anxious and, at the same time, greatly afraid that pardon is not possible. My dear Friend, why need you grow despondent because another enters Heaven? A sin offering lies at your door, also! You can have your sin forgiven even as his has been forgiven–come and try for yourself!

“Where can I find Christ?” asks one. He stands at the door! He waits for you! The offering is not far to seek. You have not to climb to Heaven to bring Him down. He has descended! You have not to dive into the depths to fetch Him up. He has risen from the dead! “The Word is near you, even in your mouth,” so says Paul. What then? If you would have it for your own and know its virtue, receive it into your soul. “Alas!” cries one, “I am dying! Where is the elixir which will restore me?” In your mouth! Swallow it, by God’s Grace! You have not even to open the box to get out the pill. It is in your mouth! Receive it into your inward parts. Jesus crucified is freely presented to you. All the merit of His death is here at this moment. Accept it. It is yours. A sin offering lies at the door! That is to say, the sufferings of Christ, the Atonement of Christ and the righteousness of Christ are available at this moment! You may have all that Jesus has purchased–have it for nothing, the

free gift of God! Repenting of sin and believing in Jesus, you have it all! Eternal salvation is yours if the Holy Spirit has made you willing to have it. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” Only trust Him and the death of Christ is death for you and the righteousness of Christ is your righteousness! A sin offering lies at the door. God does, as it were, say, “Bring it, I will receive it and I will receive you, for its sake.”

Do but take Christ by faith and bring Him before God. Say unto God “My Father, I have no good works to trust in, but I trust Your Son. I desire to be rid of my sin and I trust in You to purify me. I pine to become a new creature and I trust in Your Spirit to new-create me. Behold the bloody Sacrifice offered upon Calvary. I present it to You. For Jesus' sake accept me.” He will do it, dear Friend! He will do it!

I do not know that I can say any more. I wish that I could have said it better. I would speak right into your heart. May the Spirit of God so speak! Do not be angry because another is saved, but turn your anger on yourself because you have not accepted salvation. Remember, if you do what other sinners have done, namely, simply come to Christ, you shall be accepted as they have been! And if you are not accepted, it is your sin that is preventing it. A sin offering is waiting to take away that sin. Oh, reject not the priceless gift! Trifle not with your soul and with your Savior! Do not incur

an eternity of misery! Do not lose an eternity of bliss! “Turn you, turn you; why will you die, O house of Israel?”

If I never should occupy this pulpit again, what should I wish to have preached? Nothing but the Gospel which I have now preached for so many years. I wish I had spoken better, but I do not know that I could have said more. If these kind pleadings do not touch angry hearts, neither would they be affected though martyrs rose from the dead.

Ge 4:9 • Am I My Brother's Keeper?

SERMON 1399

A*m I My Brother's Keeper?*

"Am I my brother's keeper?"

Genesis 4:9

To what a shameful pitch of presumptuous impudence had Cain arrived when he could thus insult the Lord God! If it had not been on record in the pages of Inspiration, we might almost have doubted whether a man could speak so impudently when actually conscious that God Himself was addressing Him. Men blaspheme frightfully, but it is usually because they forget God and ignore His Presence. But Cain was conscious that God was speaking to him. He heard Him say, "Where is Abel your brother?" and yet he dared, with the coolest impertinence, to reply to God, "I know not. Am I

my brother's keeper?" As much as to say–"Do You think that I have to keep him as he keeps his sheep? Am I also a shepherd as he was and am I to take as much care of him as he did of a lame lamb?"

The cool impudence of Cain is an indication of the state of heart which led up to his murdering his brother and it was also a part of the result of his having committed that terrible crime. He would not have proceeded to the cruel deed of bloodshed if he had not, first, cast off the fear of God and been ready to defy his Maker. Having committed murder, the hardening influence of sin upon Cain's mind must have been intense and so, at last, he was able to speak out to God's face what he felt within his heart and ask, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

This goes a long way to explain what has puzzled some persons, namely, the amazing calmness with which great criminals will appear in the dock. I remember to have heard it said of one who had undoubtedly committed a very foul murder, that he looked like an innocent man. He stood up before his accusers as calmly and quietly, they said, as an innocent man would do. I remember feeling, at the time, that an innocent man would probably not have been calm! The distress of mind occasioned to an innocent man by being under such a charge would have prevented his having the coolness which was displayed by the guilty individual. Instead of its being any evidence of innocence that a man wears a brazen front

when charged with a great crime, it should, by wise men, be considered to be evidence against him.

Well may he seem dispassionate and unmoved who has already been so unfeeling as to dip his hand in blood. If he were so hardened as to do the deed, it is not likely he will display much softness when the deed is brought home to him. Oh, dear Friends, let us shun sin, if it is only for the evil effect which it has upon our minds! It is poison to the heart! It stupefies the conscience, drugs it, sends it to sleep! It intoxicates the judgment and puts all the faculties, as it were, into a state of drunkenness, so that we become capable of monstrous bravery and blind impertinence which makes us mad enough to dare insult God to His face! Save us, O God, from having our hearts hammered to the hardness of steel by sin! Daily keep us, by Your Grace, sensible and tender before You, trembling at Your Word.

Now, let us note, here, that while we are thus heavily censuring Cain, we must mind that we are not guilty ourselves! If we look at it without prejudice, every kind of excuse that we make to God is a very high piece of presumption. When we are charged with any form of guilt, if we begin denying or extenuating, we are guilty of the sin of Cain as to impudence before God. And when there is any duty to be performed and we begin to shirk it, or try to make an apology for disobedience, are we not forgetting in whose Presence we stand? Does He charge me with what I have committed and

shall I be so wicked as to attempt a denial? Does He bid me perform a duty and do I begin to hesitate, question and ask myself, "Shall I, or shall I not?" Oh, bold rebellion! The essence of treason lurks in every hesitancy to obey and dwells in every attempt to extenuate our fault when we have already disobeyed.

You think Cain a monster that he should dare to face it out with God? Yet God is everywhere present and every sin is perpetrated while He is watching! Against Him do we sin and in His Presence we do evil! And when we begin to make excuses for wrong done or hesitate concerning duty commanded, we are disobeying in the immediate Presence of the Lord our God. Since we have, doubtless, been guilty of this, let us humbly confess it and ask the Lord to give us great tenderness of conscience that from now on we may fear the Lord and never dare to stand up to question what He has to say. The very same thing, no doubt, lies at the bottom of objections to Bible Truths. There are some who do not go to Scripture to take out of it what is there, but seeing what is clearly revealed they then begin to question and judge and come to conclusions according to their notions of what ought to have been there.

No, but O Man, who are you that replies against God? If He says it, it is so! Believe it! Can you not understand it? Who are you that you should understand? Can you hold the sea in the hollow of your hand, or grasp the winds in your fist? Worm of the dust, the Infinite must always be beyond you! There must always be about the

glorious Lord something that is incomprehensible and it is not for you to doubt because you cannot understand, but rather humbly to bow before His Presence who has made you and in whose hand your breath is. God save us from the presumption which dares to say with Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" and from the profane arrogance which replies to the Lord in the spirit of Cain!

Now, let us look quietly at what Cain said. He said to the Lord, "Am I my brother's keeper?" May the Holy Spirit guide us in considering this question.

First it is to be noted that MAN IS NOT HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER IN SOME SENSES. There is some little weight in what Cain says. Generally some amount of truth clings to every lie and even in the greatest possible profanity there is, usually, something or other of truth, though it is grievously twisted and distorted. In this atrocious question of Cain there is some little measure of reason. In some sense no man is his brother's keeper. For instance, every man must bear his own responsibility for his own acts before Almighty God. It is not possible for a man to shift from his own shoulders to those of another his obligations to the Most High.

Obedience to the Law of God must be personally rendered or a man becomes guilty. No matter how holy his father, or how righteous his mother, he, himself will have to stand upon his own feet and answer for himself before the judgment seat of God. Each

man who hears the Gospel is responsible for the hearing of it. No one else can believe the Gospel for him, or repent for him, or be born again for him, or become a Christian for him. He must, himself, personally, repent of sin, personally believe in Jesus Christ, personally be converted and personally live to the service and Glory of God. Every tub must stand on its own bottom. There have been idle attempts to shift the responsibility to a certain order of men called priests, or clergymen, or ministers–according as the case may be–but it cannot be done.

Each man must seek the Lord himself–he must, himself, lay his load of sin at the foot of the Cross and he, himself, accept a personal Savior for himself. You cannot do with the matters of your soul as you do with the business of your estate and employ a priest in the same way as you engage a solicitor to represent you. There is one Substitute and Advocate who can plead for us, but no earthly sponsor can help you with Heaven. God demands the heart and with the heart man must believe unto righteousness–his own heart–for none can take his place. Personal service is required by the great King and must be rendered on pain of eternal destruction! No man can be his brother's keeper in the sense of taking upon himself another man's responsibilities.

And again, no one can positively secure the salvation of another, no, he cannot even have a hope of the salvation of his friend, so long as the other remains unbelieving. O unconverted people, we

can pray for you, we can ask the Lord to renew you by His Spirit, but we can do nothing with you, ourselves! And neither will our prayers be answered until you, yourselves, make a confession of your sin and fly to Christ for salvation! It is, no doubt, a very great blessing to have friends who bear your names upon their hearts before God, but, oh, do not have any confidence in other people's prayers while you are prayerless! We ought to be very thankful that other people can pray believingly for us, but we shall never be saved if we remain unbelieving! Now, since we cannot convert other people, we are not responsible to do what we cannot do and, therefore, we are not our brother's keeper so fully as to be responsible for his acceptance or reception of Jesus.

And here let me say, in the next place, that those do very wrongly who enter into any vows or promises for others in this matter when they are quite powerless. To me it always remains a riddle, which I cannot explain except by the utter heartlessness and godlessness of this age, that men and women are to be found to come forward to solemnly promise concerning a little child, as yet unconscious, that it shall keep all God's holy commandments and walk in the same all the days of its life and shall renounce all the pomps and vanities of this present evil world! I dare not stop short of saying that you lie most frightfully if you make any such promise! You go farther than that–you are guilty of perjury before almighty God!

With what wrath He must look down upon persons, who, in an edifice which they think to be sacred to His honor and in the presence of those who wear vestments which are supposed to mark them out as peculiarly the messengers of God, dare to say that they will do that which is quite out of their power! You cannot do it and you know it! You have, perhaps, not renounced the pomps and vanities of the world for yourselves! Certainly YOU have not kept all God's holy commandments! How, then, can you do it for another? If you stood up there and promised before God that the child should grow eight feet high, that its hair should be of a yellow color and that its eyes should be green, you would be quite as much justified in making such a vow as in promising that which is prescribed in the Prayer Book–only there would be a touch of the ludicrous about that–but in this there is nothing that I can see to smile about, but everything to mourn over!

It is sad that the human mind should be capable of such a use of words that it should dare to pronounce a lie as an act of worship and then go calmly and quietly home as though everything had been done to please God! No, you cannot be other people's keepers. Do not, therefore, put yourselves into the awful position of promising that you will be. It is proper, here, to say that the most earnest minister of Christ must not so push the idea of his own personal responsibility to such an extreme as to make himself unfit for his work through a morbid view of his position. If he has

faithfully preached the Gospel and his message is rejected, let him persevere in hope and not condemn himself.

I remember years ago, when I labored to feel the responsibility of men's souls upon me, I became very depressed in spirit and the temptation arose out of it to give up the work in despair. I believe that responsibility should be duly felt, neither do I wish to say a word to excuse any who are unfaithful, but in my own case I saw that I could harp on one chord of my nature till I destroyed my power to do good, for I became so unhappy that the elasticity of my spirit departed from me. Then I remembered that if I had put the Gospel faithfully before you and pressed it upon you–if you refused it I had nothing more to do with the matter except to pray over it–if I earnestly entreated the Lord to send a blessing and tried again and again to plead and urge with your consciences that you should be reconciled to God, and if I failed, I remembered that I should not be held responsible for not doing what I could not do, namely, turn hearts of stone to flesh and quicken dead sinners into life!

Our responsibility is heavy enough without our exaggerating it! We are not men's sponsors and if they reject our Savior whom we faithfully preach, their blood must be upon their own heads. Our Lord did not always weep over Jerusalem–He sometimes rejoiced in spirit! No one thought must exclusively occupy our minds or we shall be good for nothing in practical life. We are not the keepers of

other men's souls in a boundless sense–there is a limit to our responsibility and it is foolish to allow an excessive sensitiveness to burden us into semi-lunacy. There is, however, a sense in which we are our brother's keeper and of that I am now going to speak. You will bear my warning in mind and it will not weaken the force of what I say, but it will increase its weight, because you will feel that I have looked at the subject all round.

II. So now, secondly, IN A HIGH DEGREE WE ARE, EACH ONE OF US, OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER. We ought to regard ourselves in that light and it is a Cainish spirit which prompts us to think otherwise and to wrap ourselves up in hardheartedness and say, "It is no concern of mine how others fare. Am I my brother's keeper?" Let us be far from that spirit! For, first, common feelings of humanity should lead every Christian man to feel an interest in the soul of every unsaved man. I say, "common humanity," for we use the word, "humanity," to signify kindness.

Such-and-such a man, we say, has no human feeling. I am not quite certain whether human feeling is always so humane as the words would seem to imply. Humanity over yonder, at any rate, in Russia and Turkey, does not seem to be a flower worth cultivating–but we might pray to be delivered from such humanity! The most horrible beast in those regions appears to be a man. Humanity in Bulgaria? God save us from such humanity!

Yet I trust among us the expression may be used that common humanity leads us to desire the salvation of others. I am sure, my dear Friends, if you saw a man perishing for lack of bread, you would wish to share your crust with him. Will you let souls perish for lack of the Bread of Life without pitying and helping them? If we saw a poor wretch shivering in the winter's cold, we should be ready to divide our raiment that we might clothe him. Shall we see sinners without the Robe of Righteousness and not be anxious to speak to them of Him who can clothe them in fair white linen?

When a person is in jeopardy through accident, we rush anywhere and use every exertion if by any means we may rescue him and yet this life is trivial compared with eternal life and for us to be indifferent when men are perishing–indifferent to the dreadful woes which come upon impenitent sinners throughout eternity–is to act as if all brotherly compassion had fled our bosoms! Christians, I charge you, even upon so base a motive as this–because you are men and men are all your brothers, born of the same stock and dwelling beneath the arched roof of the one eternal Father–therefore care for the souls of others and be, each one of you, his brother's keeper!

A second argument is drawn from the fact that we have, all of us, especially those of us who are Christians, the power to do good to others. We have not all the same ability, for we have not all the same gifts, or the same position, but as the little maid that waited

on Naaman's wife had opportunity to tell of the Prophet who could heal her master, so there is not a young Christian here but what has some power to do good to others. Converted children can lisp the name of Jesus to their sires and bless them! We have all some capacity for doing good. Now, take it as an axiom that power to do good involves the duty of doing good. Wherever you are placed, if you can bless a man, you are bound to do it. To have the power and not to use it is a sin!

In withholding your hand from that which you are able to do for the good of your fellow man you have broken the law of love. You do not need a special call to tell a sinner about Jesus. You need no special call to take a little child and tell it of the Savior's love. You need no revelation by angels from Heaven to tell you that what has benefited yourself will benefit your fellow men. All your knowledge, all your experience, all that you possess that Divine Grace has given you demands a return in the form of service rendered to others! The Jews were God's elect nation–elect to keep the oracles of God for all the nations–but they failed because they never cared for the bearing of those great Truths of God upon the Gentiles. They fancied that they had received them for their own special benefit. The selfish spirit so grew upon them that when God's Grace to the heathen was mentioned it made them mad with rage!

And, you saved ones, you owe much to God–but do not think that you are saved only for your own special benefit. It is a great benefit to you, but Grace is bestowed upon you like light that you may give it to others who are in darkness! It is bestowed upon you as the bread that was given by our Lord to His disciples in the desert that they might break it among the multitude–that all might eat and be filled! Think about this–that the power to do good involves the responsibility to do it wherever that power exists–and so, as far as you have any ability, you are by that very fact constituted your brother's keeper.

Another argument is very plainly drawn from our Lord's version of the Moral Law. What is the Second and great Commandment according to Him? "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Now, since we have loved ourselves so well that through God's Grace we have sought and found forgiveness of our sin, should we not love our neighbor so well as to desire him to know his sin and to seek forgiveness? It was right of us to secure our highest interests by laying hold upon eternal life–but if we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, should we give ourselves any rest while multitudes are despising Christ and refusing salvation? No, Brothers and Sisters, we have never yet come up to the standard–but in proportion as we begin to love our neighbor as ourselves we shall certainly feel that God has made us in a measure to be our brother's keeper.

And again, without looking to other men's souls we cannot keep the First of the two great Commandments in which our Lord has summarized the Moral Law. It runs thus–"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." But this we cannot possibly do unless we have a love towards our brother's soul, for well does the Apostle ask–"If a man loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" It is all very fine to stand up and sing about your love to God and let the missionary box go by while your eyes are gazing into Heaven–but if you do not care for the heathens' souls, how can you care for God? It is all very pretty to be enamored of Christ and to have a sweet experience, or to think you have, and yet poor wretches in London are dying without the knowledge of the Savior and you can let them die and let them sink into Hell without emotion.

May God save us from such piety! It is very pretty to look at, like the gilt on the gingerbread in the old fairs, but there is no gold about it at all. A loveless religion is good for nothing! He who does not love his fellow man enough to desire his salvation and aim at it with all his might, gives no proof that he loves God at all! Think of these things and weigh my arguments with candor.

Once more. To the Christian man, perhaps the most forcible reason will be that the whole example of Jesus Christ, whom we call Master and Lord, lies in the direction of our being the keeper

of our brother, for what was Jesus' life but entire unselfishness? What was said of Him at His death but that, “He saved others: Himself He could not save”? The very fact that there is a Christ at all means that there was One who cared for others! That our Lord became a Man means that He loved His enemies and came here to rescue those who rebelled against His authority!

If we are selfish–if we make our own going to Heaven to be the one end of life–we are not Christians! We may call whom we please, Master, but we are not following Jesus Christ! Do you shed tears? But do you weep over Jerusalem? Tears for yourselves are poor things if there are never any for others. You pray and agonize–but is your grief ever caused by bearing the burden of other men’s souls? Are you like He with whose name Gethsemane must ever be connected in our memories? Oh, though we gave our bodies to be burned, yet if we have not love for mankind it profits us nothing! We may go a long way and apparently all the way in the externals of the Christian religion, but if the heart is never warm with a desire to benefit mankind, we are still aliens to the commonwealth of which Jesus is the great Head. I am sure it is so! I speak not my own mind, but the mind of Christ. If He were here, what would He say to anyone who called himself His disciple and yet never lifted his hand or moved his tongue to snatch the firebrand from the flame or save the sinner from the error of his ways? It must be so, then–we must be our brothers' keepers.

Let the next thought rise in our minds that we are certainly ordained to the office of brother-keeper because we shall be called to account about it. Cain was called to account. “Where is Abel your brother?” I would to God, dear Friends, and especially you, the young men of the College, who asked me to speak about missions, tonight, that you could now hear the Lord speaking to you and saying, “Where is Abel your brother?” Take first those who are united to us by the ties of the flesh, who come under the term, “brothers,” because they are born of the same parents, or are near of kin. Where is John? Where is Thomas? Where is Henry, your brother? Unsaved? Without God? What have you ever done for him? How much have you prayed for him? How often have you spoken to him seriously about his state? What means have you used for his instruction, persuasion, conviction?

Dear Sisters, I must not let you off. Where is your brother? You sisters have very great power over brothers–more power than brothers have. Where, dear Mother–let me put the question very tenderly to you–where is your child, your son, your daughter? Not all that you could wish, you say? But can you say, if your dear child were to perish, that you are clear of his blood? Father, the boy grieves you–are you quite clear that you did not help to sow in him the sins which are now your trial? Come, have you done all that could be done? If, in a week’s time, you had to follow in mournful procession, your son’s body to the grave, are you quite clear? Quite

clear? Relatives, I put you all together–are you quite clear of the blood of relatives? The day will come when the question will have to be put very plainly, "Where is Abel your brother?"

You cannot help it, I know, that such a one lives in sin and has become an unbeliever or a scoundrel. You cannot absolutely help it, but still, have you done all that you could have done towards the preventing of the sin by leading that soul into the way of life and peace? I pause for a moment to let that solemn enquiry go home to everyone. The proverb says, "Charity must begin at home," and certainly Christian love ought to begin there. Are our own houses swept? Our own children, servants, brothers and sisters–have we as much as lies in us sought to win them to Christ? For my part, I abhor the spirit which takes a Christian mother from her children to be doing good everywhere except at home! I dread the zeal of those who can run to many services but whose households are not cared for–yet sometimes such is the case.

I have known people very interested in the seven trumpets and the seven seals who have not been quite so particular about the seven dear children that God has entrusted to them! Leave somebody else to open up the Revelation and look to your own boys! Mind where they are in the evenings! And see to your girls, that they know, at least, the Gospel, for, indeed, there are some households where there is ignorance of the plan of salvation, albeit that the parents are professedly Christians! Such things ought not to be! Where is Abel

your brother? Your son? Where is your daughter, your sister, your father, your cousin? See to this, that you begin at once, earnestly seeking the salvation of relatives!

But, Beloved, we must never end there, because brotherhood extends to all ranks, races and conditions. And according to each man's ability, he will be held responsible about the souls of others whom he never saw. Where is Abel your brother? Down in a back street in London? He is just going into the public house. He is half drunk already! Have you done anything, Friend, towards the reclaiming of the drunk? Where is your sister? Your sister who frequents the midnight streets? You shrink back and say, "She is no sister of mine!" Yes, but God may require her blood at your hands if you leave her to perish! Have you ever done anything towards reclaiming her? She has a tender heart despite her sin. Alas, many a Christian woman, many a Christian man who comes across the path of such will draw themselves up with a kind of Phariseeism, shake the dust off their feet and feel as if they were contaminated by their very presence!

Yet Christians ought to love the erring and the sinful–and if we do not, we shall be called to account for it. If we have an opportunity of doing good, even to the vilest, and do not use it, we shall not be guiltless! Some of you who get rich in London go and live out in the suburbs and I cannot blame you. Why should you not? But if you leave the heart of London, where the working people are

without any means of Divine Grace–if you are content to hear the Gospel yourselves and withdraw your wealth from struggling Churches among the poor, God will one day say to you, “Where is Abel your brother?”

City merchant, where are the poor men that earned your wealth? Where are they who, after all, were the bone and sinew that made you rich–from whom you fled as though they were struck with the plague and whom you left to die in utter ignorance? Oh, see to this, you rich men, you persons in responsible positions–lest the blood of the poor of London be demanded of your souls at the great Day of Account! Yes, but London is not everywhere, nor is this little isle of England everything. Look, if you can, across sea and land to India where your fellow subjects live and, alas, die at this hour of famine. The day will come when God will say to English Christians, “Where is the Hindu, your brother? Where is the Brahmin your brother? Where is the Soodra your brother?”

And what answer will be given by the men who ought to be there and have the ability to be there? What answer will be given by rich men who ought to help to send missionaries there, but suffer the millions to perish without a knowledge of Christ, not lifting their hand to help? And further still lies China! That does not bear thinking of, with its teeming millions–millions who have never even heard the sound of Jesus' name! Their destiny we leave with God, but still, we know that to be ignorant of God and of His Christ

is a frightful thing–and every man who has light, unless his duty lies at home, should gird up his loins and say in God's name–"I will not have the blood of India streaming down my gory clothes, nor the blood of China pouring a curse upon my head." The Lord grant to all Christians to see their relation to mankind and to act a brother's part to all races!

One thing more upon this calling to account. The more needy, the more destitute people are, the greater is their claim upon us, for, according to the Account Book–need I turn to the chapter? I think you remember it–they are the persons for whom we shall have mainly to give an account–"I was hungry and you gave Me no meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink. I was sick and in prison and you visited Me not; naked and you clothed Me not." These objects of charity were the most destitute and poor of all–and the great question at the Last Day is about what was done for them! So if there is a nation more ignorant than another, our call is there first. And if there is a people more sunken and degraded than others, it is concerning them that we shall have to give a special account!

Now, I close this second head about our really being our brother's keeper by saying this–there are some of us who are our brother's keeper voluntarily, but yet most solemnly, by the office that we hold. We are ministers. O brother ministers, we are our brother's keepers! "If the watchman warns them not, they shall perish." That

is an awful sentence to me–"They shall perish." The next is not so awful, sometimes, to my heart, but it is very dreadful–"But their blood will I require at the watchman's hands." You cannot enter the Christian ministry without standing where you will need almighty Grace to keep you clear of the blood of souls! Yes, and you Sunday school teachers, when you undertake to teach that class of children, you enter under the most solemn responsibilities!

I may add that all of you who name the name of Jesus, by that very fact, come into your measure of responsibility, for Christ has said, not of ministers, nor of Sunday school teachers only, but of all, "You are the light of the world." If you give no light what shall be said of you? "You are the salt of the earth." If there is no savor in you what will become of you but to be cast out and trod under foot of men?

III. My time quite fails me. I need much more, but if I leave those thoughts with you I shall be well content. However, I must occupy a little longer space while I speak on the third head, namely, that IT WILL BE HIGH PRESUMPTION ON OUR PART IF, FROM THIS NIGHT FORWARD, WE SHIRK THE DUTY OF BEING OUR BROTHER'S KEEPER. I will set it very briefly in a strong light. It will be denying the right of God to make a Law and to call upon us to obey it if we refuse to do as we are told. God has so organized society that every man receiving light is bound to spread it–and if you decline the blessed service you will practically deny

the right of God to require such service of you! You will be judging your Judge and lording it over your God. High treason lies in that!

Notice, next, that you will be denying all claims on your part to Divine Mercy because if you will not render mercy to others, and if you altogether deny your responsibility to others, you put yourself into the position of saying, "I need nothing from another"–consequently, nothing from God! Such mercy as you show, such mercy shall you have. The question is not what will become of the heathen if you do not teach them–the great question is what will become of you if you do not do it? If you let sinners die, what will become of you? That is the point. You put yourself out of the reach of mercy because you refuse to render it. When you bow your knee in prayer you curse yourself, for you ask God to forgive your debts as you forgive your debtors and, in effect, you ask Him to deal with you as you are dealing with others. What mercy, then, can you expect?

Indeed, there is this about it, too–that your act is something like throwing the blame of your own sin upon God if you leave men to perish. When Cain said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" He meant, probably, "You are the Preserver of men. Why did You not preserve Abel? I am not his keeper." Some throw on the Sovereignty of God the weight which lies on their own indolence! If one soul perishes without being taught the Gospel, you cannot fling the weight of that fact upon Divine Sovereignty until the Christian Church has

done her utmost to make the Gospel known! If we had all done all that could be done–I mean all of us who are Believers–and yet souls perished, the blame would lie with men themselves. But where we fall short–to that degree we are our brother's keeper–and we must not accuse the Lord.

And again, there is, to my mind, an utter ignoring of the whole plan of salvation in that man who says, "I am not going to have any responsibility about others," because the whole plan of salvation is based on substitution–on the care of Another for us–on the Sacrifice of Another for us. And the whole spirit of it is self-sacrifice and love to others. If you say, "I will not love"–well, the whole system goes together and you renounce it all if you will not love–you cannot have love's benediction. If you will not love, you cannot be saved by love. And if you fancy that the Christian faith leaves you unloving and selfish and yet takes you to Heaven, you have made a grievous mistake! There is no such religion propagated by the Word of God, for the religion of Jesus teaches that since Christ has so loved us we are, therefore, to love one another and to love the ungodly so as to endeavor to bring them to the feet of the Savior. God grant that these words may have a salutary effect by the Spirit of God applying them to your souls!

Last of all, it may turn out–it may turn out–that if we are not our brother's keeper we may be our brother's murderer! Have any of us been so already? When were you converted? Will you kindly look

back to your sins before conversion? He must be a very happy man who did not, before conversion, commit sins which injured others! But there are some persons whose lives, before they turned to Christ, were frightfully blended with the careers of others whom they have left to perish in the gall of bitterness! I have seen bitter tears shed by men who lived evil lives, when they have remembered others with whom they sinned. "I am forgiven. I am saved," one has said to me. "But what about that poor girl? Ah me! Ah me!"

One man had been an infidel and he led others into infidelity. He has been saved, himself, but he cannot bring those back, again, whom he tutored in atheism. Before conversion you may have committed many a soul-murder. Ought not this to stir you up to seek now, if possible, as much as lies in you, to bring those to Christ whom once you led away and to teach the Living Word since once you taught the deadly word which ruined souls? Much solemn thought ought to arise out of this. Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to work by you to the salvation of those whom your evil influence drew towards the Pit.

But what shall be said of our conduct since we have been converted? May we not have helped to murder souls since then? I tell you a cold-hearted Christian makes worldlings think that Christianity is a lie. Inconsistent Christians–and there are such–woe, woe that it should be so! Bad-tempered, covetous, cross-

grained, sardonic, snarling persons who we hope may be the Lord's people–what shall we say of these? How little they are like their Master! They are the propagators of death! I believe that nobody is more mischievous than a professor who is barely a Christian, or almost a Christian and continually shows his bad side to the world while yet he boasts of his piety! He disgusts the world with the name of Jesus!

Perhaps some of you have backslidden since your conversion and you have committed acts which have made the enemy to blaspheme the name of Christ. I charge you, by the love of God, repent of this iniquity! Look at what you have done! Look at how you have led others astray! Oh see to it at once! You know that when David had sinned with Bathsheba he repented and was forgiven, but he could never make poor murdered Uriah live again. He was dead. You may have gone astray and damaged a soul eternally–you cannot undo the deed. Still, if you cannot revive the slain, you can mourn over the crime! Awake, arise, you sluggish Christians, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you to be, from now on, your brother's keepers to the utmost of your power!

And do you not think that we may have been seriously injurious to others by denying them the Gospel? If you want to murder a man, you need not stab him–starve him! If you want to destroy a man, you need not teach him to drink or swear–keep back the Gospel from him! Be in his company and never say a word for

Christ! Be where you ought to speak and be sinfully silent and who knows how much blood will be laid to your door? Do you not think that to deny a cup of cold water to a man and let him die of thirst is murder? To deny the Gospel–to have no word to say for Jesus–is not this soul-murder? God accounts it so. "Well," some say, "I could not speak or preach." No, but do you pray for the conversion of others? Some people also have money entrusted to them–they cannot go to India or China, which I have been speaking of, but many other men are ready to go–and they ought to assist in sending them!

I have men in the College ready to go, but I have no power to send them! The Missionary Society is in debt. They cannot send out all they would like to and yet here are people in England with thousands of pounds that they will never need! And yet the heathen may die and be lost before they will part with their gold! Is there no crime in all this? Does not the voice of your brother's blood cry unto God from the ground? I believe it does. You are not to do what you cannot do, but what you can do. And surely there cannot be any question about such a matter as this! If you were once to see persons in peril–if you stood on the beach and saw a good ship breaking up–if you were able to hold an oar you would want to be in the lifeboat.

There is not a woman among you but would be willing to spare her husband for such a task, or lend her own hand to push the boat

down over the shingle till it was launched upon the wave. For life–for the precious life of our fellow men–we would do anything! But if we believe, as we do, that there is a world to come and a terrible Hell–and that there is no way of salvation except by Jesus Christ–we ought to feel tenfold more for the rescue of the souls of men from the wrath to come!

If some shall be stirred by these words, my heart will greatly rejoice. But if you are awakened, do not promise to make an effort in your own strength–pray to God about it. Commit yourself to God and ask the Divine Spirit to lead you into ways of usefulness, that before you go from here you may have brought some souls to Jesus. And to His name shall be the Glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Ge 4:10 • Am I Clear of His Blood?

SERMON 0461

A*m I Clear Of His Blood?*

"The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground."

Genesis 4:10

CAIN was of the Wicked One and slew his brother. "The way of Cain" is not hard to describe. He is too proud to offer atonement for his sin. He prefers his own way of sacrifice. He presents a bloodless oblation. He hates the obedience of faith. He smites the faithful Abel. Beware of the way of Cain, O proud self-righteous ones, lest you run therein, for the steps are few from self-righteous pride to hatred of true Believers and murder is not far thereafter. There is the seed of every infamy in the proud spirit of self-

justification, and it is a great mercy that it does not more often show itself in all its terrific ripeness.

Look, bold boasters of your own merits, at the mangled body of the first martyr, for this is the full-blown development of your rebellious self-conceit. From all pride and vainglory, from all self-righteousness and hatred of the Cross of Christ, good Lord deliver us.

This is not, however, the drift of my discourse this morning. I have rather to indicate the method in which we also may be guilty of this sin of blood-guiltiness concerning our brother.

Dear Friends, I feel assured that the text of this morning, terrible as it must have been in the ears of Cain, ought to ring in your ears, and mine. And it may be that while that cry is heard again, though at the distance of many thousand years, it may awaken some here present to a sense of guilt, and to a desire for amendment. And thus the blood of Abel may speak good, though terrible things to them, and prepare their ears to listen to the voice of that other blood, "which speaks better things than that of Abel."

First, we shall this morning enquire for the criminals whose brother's blood cries from the ground. Next, we will endeavor to show the hateful character of the crime. Then, thirdly, we will select the judgment. And fourthly, we will exhort the guilty ones to turn from their ways and to hear the voice of mercy.

First, then, we are to MAKE A SEARCHING ENQUIRY FOR THE CRIMINALS.

I do not intend to say much, this morning, about the act of actually slaying one's brother. The question of the rightness of war is a moot point even among moral men. Among those who read their Bibles, the allowance of defensive war may, perhaps, still be a question. But any other sort of war must certainly be condemned by the man who is a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall say nothing, however, or but very little, concerning the criminality of those ambitious and unscrupulous persons who hurry nations into war without cause.

Lust of dominion and a false pride are setting the United States on a blaze. I know at this time a tragic incident connected with the present war in America. Four brothers left one of our villages in Oxfordshire, two of whom, if now alive, are in one army and two of them in the other. And, I doubt not, as desperately as any of their comrades, they are thirsting for each other's blood. What horrors cluster around the iniquity of civil war. On yonder soil it is the blood of brothers that cries from the ground. Men are fighting, one against the other, in this lamentable conflict for no justifiable cause. The one cause which justified the war, as we thought–the snapping of the fetters of the slave–is gone. Emancipation is not proclaimed, the slave is forgotten.

What might have been a struggle for the rights of man is now a shameful and abominable slaughter of brothers by brothers. And a cry is going up to Heaven from those blood-red fields which God will hear, and will yet avenge on both sides. Oh that they would sheathe their swords and end it once and for all! What matters it if there are two nations or one? Better two in peace, than one divided with intestine strife! How much better to have even twenty nations of living men, than one nation of mangled corpses! What difference is it to the survivors if they have all the honor and dignity of conquerors, when they are stained up to their elbows in the blood of their fellow men?

Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, “Consider your ways.” Arise, you that draw your sword against your fellows and weep like the weeping of Ramah of old, and make your cities like Bochim, because of your iniquities! Go back to your homes in peace, beat your swords into plowshares, and your spears into pruning hooks, for Jehovah will have none of them. He casts out your armies like dung upon the field because every man of you smites his kinsman and his fellow!

That, however, is not my subject this morning. May God grant that whatever may come of this terrible struggle, His name may be glorified. At present I see nothing but a carnival of madmen–Hell let loose. And I fear that an evil demon has deceived both nations, and made them like ravening wolves and roaring lions.

I have to deal with you, however and not with those across the ocean. Let us come, therefore, to the point. There are many persons whose brother's blood cries to God from the ground. There is the seducer. He spoke with honeyed words and talked of love, but the poison of asps was under his tongue, for lust was in his heart. He came to a fair temple as a worshipper, but he committed infamous sacrilege and left that to be the haunt of demons which once was the palace of purity. Such men are received into society. They are looked upon as gentlemen, while the fallen woman, the harlot sister–she has to hide herself beneath the shadow of night.

None will make excuse for her sin. But the man, the criminal–he is called a respectable and reputable man–he may fill places of trust and posts of honor. And there are none who point the finger of scorn at him. Sir, the voice of that poor fallen sister's blood cries to Heaven against you! And in the day of judgment, her damnation shall be on your garments. All the infamy into which you have plunged her shall lie at your door. And among the dreadful sights of Hell, two eyes shall glare at you through the murky darkness like the eyes of serpents, burning their way into your inmost soul.

"You did deceive and decoy me to the pit," she says, "your arms dragged me down to Hell and here I lie to curse you forever and ever as the author of my eternal ruin." I know I address some such this morning. It were not possible that all men here were pure and

spotless. Hear while yet there is time for your repentance, for the voice of her blood cries unto God from the ground for vengeance.

Then there are men who educate youth in sin. Satan's captains and marshals–strong men with corrupt hearts–who are never better pleased than when they see the buds of evil swelling and ripening into crime. We have known some such–men of an evil eye, who not only loved sin, themselves, but delighted in it in others. They pat the boy on his back when he utters his first oath. They reward him when he commits his first theft. Satan has his Sunday school teachers. Hell has its missionaries who compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and make him tenfold more a child of Hell than they are themselves. Most of our villages are cursed with one such wretch–and is there a street in London which is not the haunt of one such fiend, or more?

Oh, do I speak to any here who have applauded and praised young persons when they have commenced walking in the paths of infamy? Wretch! Have you sought to entangle them in your net? Have you, like the spider, thrown first one film about them, and then another, till you have them safely in your coils to drag them down to the den of Beelzebub? Then the voice of your brother's blood cries from the ground, and at the judgment will be a witness which you shall not be able to confute–the witness of the blood of souls ruined by your foul and evil training. Beware you who hunt for the precious life!

Yes, and I know some base men who, if they see young converts, will take a pride in putting stumbling blocks in their way. They no sooner discover that there is some little working of conscience, than they laugh, they sneer, they point the finger. How often have I seen this in the husband who seeks to prevent the wife's attendance at the House of God and in the young man who jeers at his companion because he felt something of the power of religion! Is not this too frequent in our great establishments in London–where one young man kneels to pray and many are found to laugh at him and hurl some foul term at his head? Not content to perish, themselves, like dogs pursuing a rabbit, so will the wicked haunt the godly.

Oh, you who are the enlisting sergeants for the Black Prince of Darkness, you who seem never as happy as when you set your traps for souls to lure them to destruction–solemnly do I warn you. Oh, take the warning, lest God's avenging angel, without earnest, should soon overtake you with the dividing sword which shall smite you even to the neck, and make you feel how terrible a thing it is to have tried to ruin the servants of the living God.

Then there is the infidel, the man who is not content to keep his sin in his own breast but must publish his infamy. He ascends the platform and blasphemes the Almighty to His face! He defies the Eternal. He takes Scripture to make it the subject of unhallowed jest. He makes religion a theme for comedy. Take heed, Sir, there

will be a tragedy by-and-by, in which you shall be the chief sufferer! What shall I say of those men who are more diligent by far than half of God's ministers are? Whose names we see plastered on every wall? They go from town to town, especially where in greatest numbers artisans are dwelling, and never seem content unless they are preaching against everything that is pure and lovely and of good report.

They utter things which would make your cheeks blush if you heard them, and at the very reading of which, the marrow of your bones might melt–dreadful things against the Most High–such as David heard when he said, "Horror has taken hold of me because of the wicked that keep not Your Law." Oh, Sirs! Should I address such persons here, the voice of your brother's blood cries to Jehovah this day. The young men you have deluded, the working men you have led astray, the sinners whose lullaby you have sung, the souls that you have poisoned with your foul draughts, the multitudes–the multitudes that you have deceived–all these shall stand up at the last, an exceedingly great army, and pointing their fingers at you, shall demand your swift destruction because you decoyed them to their doom.

And what shall I say of the unfaithful preacher? The slumbering watchman of souls, the man who swore at God's altar that he was called of the Holy Spirit to preach the Word of God? The man upon whose lips men's ears waited with attention while he stood like a

priest at God's altar to teach Israel God's Law? The man who performed his duties half-a-sleep, in a dull and careless manner until men slept, too, and thought religion but a dream? What shall I say of the minister of unholy life, whose corrupt practice out of the pulpit has made the most telling things in the pulpit to be of no avail, has blunted the edge of the sword of the Spirit and turned the back of God's army in the day of battle?

Yes, what shall I say of the man who has amused his audience with pretty things when he ought to have roused their consciences, who has been rounding periods when he ought to have announced the judgment of God? Who has been preaching a dead morality when he ought to have lifted Christ on high as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness? What shall I say, Brothers and Sisters, of those who have dwindled away their congregations, who have sown strife and schism in Churches of Christ once happy, peaceful and prosperous? What shall I say of the men who, out of the pulpit, have made a jest of the most solemn things, whose life has been so devoid of holy passion and devout enthusiasm that men have thought the Truth of God to be fiction, religion a stage play, prayer a nullity, the Spirit of God a phantom, and eternity a joke?

Among all who will need eternal compassion, surely the unfaithful, unholy, unearnest minister of Christ will be the most pitiable! What did I say? No, rather the most contemptible, the most despicable, the most accursed! Surely, every thunderbolt shall

make his brow its target and every arrow of God shall seek his conscience as its mark.

If I must perish, let me suffer any way but as a minister who has desecrated the pulpit by a slumbering style of ministry, by a want of passion for souls. God knows how oftentimes this body trembles with horror at the thought the blood of souls should be required at my hands. And I cannot, and I hope I never may–I cannot understand that lifeless performance of duty, that cold and careless going through of services which, alas, is too common. How shall such men answer for it at the bar of God–the smooth things, the polite and honeyed words, the daubing of men with the untempered mortar of peace, peace, when they should have dealt with them honestly as in God's name?

Oh, Sirs, if we ever play the Boanerges, we shall hear God's thunder in our ears and that forever and ever and, cursed of men, and cursed of the Most High shall we be without end. In Tophet we shall have this wail peculiar to ourselves, "We preached what we did not feel. We testified of what we did not know. Men received not our witness, for we were hypocrites, and deceivers, and now we go down, richly deserving it, to the very lowest depths of perdition."

But, my Hearers, think not when I thus speak of the ministry, that I am about to permit you to escape. The voice of your brother's blood cries to God from the ground, even though you are no infidel

lecturer, though you have never been debauched, though you have taught no heresy, though you have spread no schism. If your life is unholy, your brother's blood is on your garments. "Oh," says one, "if I sin, I sin to myself." Impossible! As well might the gasses say "I am deadly to myself alone." As well might the cholera say "my deadly breath is for myself only." Your example spreads. You, like the leper, leave uncleanliness on everything you touch. The very atmosphere which surrounds you breeds contagion.

What others see you do, they learn to do. Some may rival you and exceed you, but if you taught them their letters, and they learn to read in Hell's book better than you, all that they learn afterwards will come to your door, because the elements of sin they learned from your practice. I am afraid many people never look at their transgressions in this light. Why, you cannot help being leaders and teachers. If in your own house you are a drunkard, your boys will be drunkards, too! I have heard of a man who flogged his boy for swearing, swearing at him all the time he did it. We know instances of men who feel as if they would sooner bury their children than see them grow up such as they are themselves–but yet how can it be helped?

Your practice must, and will, influence your children. No, not your children only, but all with whom you come into connection in the mercantile world. Do not think, Sir, if you are a great employer, that your men can know what your life is without being affected by

that knowledge? There may be some among them who have an inward principle which will not yield to temptation, but I know of hardly anything more dangerous than for a number of operatives to come constantly into contact with one whom they look up to as a master–who is also a master of the arts of sin and a doctor of damnation to their souls. Oh, take care, if not for yourselves, yet for others, or else, as sure as you live, the voice of your brother's blood will cry unto God from the ground.

To come yet closer home to this present audience. How much of the blood of man will die at the door of careless professors. You that make a profession of being Christians, and yet live in sin, you are the murderers of souls by the thousands. And you, too, who are moral enough in your conversation, and regular in your attendance on the outward forms of religion–you who never weep over sinners, you who never pray for them, you who never speak to them–you who leave all that to your minister, and think you have nothing to do with it–the voice of your brother's blood cries from the ground to Heaven.

There died a man in your court the other day. You spoke not to him about his soul–his blood cries to Heaven against you! You live in a villa in the country. There was a neighbor of yours–you were on speaking terms with him but you talked not to him about his soul–he is dead. He is gone–his blood cries to God against you! You have relations, relations to whom you could speak with

familiarity. You have talked to them of business. You have befriended them, perhaps, in their needs, but you have never said a word to them about escaping from Hell and fleeing to Heaven. When you shall hear the mournful news that they have departed this life–will not their blood cry against you from the ground where they are buried?

You work, young man, in an establishment where you are somewhat respected, and, without intrusiveness you might often say a good word for your Master, but you do not. The blood of your fellows shall cry against you if they perish! Do not think the minister is the only man who is responsible for souls? God has made you all watchmen. All of you, in your spheres, are to be watchers for the souls of men. And, "If the watchman warns them not," says the Lord, "they shall perish but their blood will I require at the watchman's hands."

I know you do not think of this, and I am sorrowfully conscious that I do not feel it myself so much as I ought to do. Ah, the servants of Satan shame me! They shame me, they shame me! There comes at night a message to some of you who are the servants of Satan–"The master is come, and he calls for you." You leave your wife and your children without a tear. You go to your master's house and there are cups, foul cups, passing round, and you will drink, and drink, and drink, and drink on–never denying your master, confessing him with many an oath–saying to your

comrades many things which injure your poor souls, and yet you do it so bravely, oh, so bravely!

You hardly know how you get home at night, but when the morning comes and you awake, there is the redness of the eyes, the headache, and the sickness. But the next night when your master wants you, you go again. And so you will do year after year, even though delirium tears you like a whirlwind. But here am I, a servant of God, and when my Master calls for me, and bids me go and confess Him, I am tempted to be still. And when He tells me to speak to yonder man, I would wickedly avoid the task. And whereas you confess your master and imprecate a curse upon your heads, how often do some of us confess our Master as timidly as if we feared a curse, when instead it is by confession that the curse is turned away!

Oh, it is enough to make us Christians ashamed to think how sinners will confess their god! Hear them at night as they reel home through the streets! They are not ashamed of their lord and master. Hear how they swear and defy Heaven! They are ashamed of nothing for their lord. And yet we, who have Heaven for our reward, and such a Christ to serve, and One so good and gracious to us–look at us–look at us! What poor lovers of our Savior are we! What poor lovers of the souls of men! I know this is not true of all of you, for there are some of you who love men's souls. I have delighted to see in many of you that deep earnestness which makes

you yearn for the conversion of others. You will sometimes take your stand at the corner of the street, and though you cannot speak as you would, yet, the tears running down your cheeks prove your earnestness.

There are many women among you, too, who have spoken a good word for Christ in strange places, and have never been ashamed of Him. But oh, there are some of you, the members of this Church, over whom the angels of glory might weep, for what do you do for Christ? What do you give to Christ? You are content to go to Heaven, yourselves, but you let your neighbors perish for lack of knowledge, and neither the Mission will you help, nor anything else besides. The blood, the blood of dying London cries from the ground against you before God!

The perishing crowds of every street, and every court and every alley send up their wail to Heaven–"O, God! Your professing people have forgotten us." The daughter of Zion is become like the ostrich of the desert. The tongue of the sucking child cleaves to the roof of its mouth for want of moisture! O, God, will You not visit Your Church for this, and make these, Your people, that forget the souls of men, smart even to the quick?

I do not know whether I have seized hold of any of your consciences, but if I have, may God the Holy Spirit get such a grip of you that He may never let you rest till you say, "Great God, in Your name I will do something, that the next time I hear the bell

toll I may be able to say, 'I did what I could for that man and if his soul has perished, his blood does not lie at my door, for I did tell him the way of salvation, I did exhort him to flee from the wrath to come.' " I am afraid none of us are altogether guiltless here. We must all take some degree of sin to our own consciences. I fear against everyone of us, to some extent, the voice of our brother's blood cries unto Heaven because of our sloth.

II. But to pass on. I was, in the second place, to HOLD UP THIS CRIME TO SCORN–the chief point being whose blood it is. It is the blood of our Brethren. "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground." All men are our Brethren. If any of them perish, and if we have not done our best for their conversion, their blood has a fearful and telling cry against us when it reaches to Heaven. But I shall rather dwell this morning upon certain special cases. Perhaps, young man, it is your natural brother's blood that cries against you. You have been converted to God, say, these three, four, ten, or twenty years. You have done nothing for your brother's conversion–never written him a letter begging him to think of his state. Never spoken a kind and gentle word to him about Christ.

No, you have been content to let him know you were a Christian, and were half afraid of that, but you have done nothing for him. Will not your brother, if he perishes, be well able to say, "My brother and I did hang at the same breast, and were rocked in the

same cradle. We played together. We filled one home with glee–he professed to know the way of life but he never told me the way. He professed to have pardon for his sins, but he never told me how I might find it, too. He suffered me to go unpitied to my doom without a tear"? Will not the voice of such blood as that cry against us if we have been guilty?

It may be, however, it is the blood of your father or mother. Some of you young people have come to London and God has met with you in this House of Prayer. You still have ungodly parents in the country–have you quite forgotten them? What if your gray-headed sire should die! You know he never thinks of God. What if he should die before his son has talked to him! Oh, you have a strange power, you sons and daughters. If you will only pluck the old man by the sleeve and say, "Father, by the child's love I bear you, I would desire to see you saved!"

And do you fling this power away? Would you see your father and mother sold to slavery, and if it were in your power to redeem them, would you keep the sordid pelf? Or if you saw them sick, would you spare your feet and not run for a physician? Or if you saw them sinking in the stream, would you not leap in, at the peril of your own life, and rescue them? And will you let them perish, perish forever, without a struggle on your part? Will you see them go down to the depths without stretching out a helping hand? I cannot think thus of you, if God has truly touched your hearts!

But what shall I say to those who are not only careless of parents but are neglecting their own children? Mother, what if the voice of your child's blood should cry to God against you? You trained that child up without the fear of God. You sent your boy and girl to school on the Sunday, it is true, but that was only to get rid of them. What was your own example to them? Bad. What was the father's example? Vicious. When your boy grows up he becomes reckless. You cannot get him to come to a place of worship with you now. No, but if you had brought him when he was a child, it may be he would have been here now. And, inasmuch as you have tutored him for Satan, if that boy of yours goes down to the pit, his soul shall cry against you.

Up to Heaven shall it send its shriek–"Oh God! The mother that did bear me, and the man that did beget me were as cruel to me as if I were not their child, for they suffered me to come here without weeping for me, without praying for me, without taking me in their arms of loving supplication and pleading that I might be saved!"

Look at this again in the case of some of you against whom the indictment lies, that you have done injury to your servants. Oh, I know great cotton growers, builders and traders, that have many men in their employment and have much to answer for. Sirs, though it is your skill and your capital that brings in your wealth, have you no responsibility towards the men who day and night toil for you? You pay them their wages, but do you think your

responsibility has ceased with that? Are they not the very bones and sinews of your establishment, and after taking everything into consideration, do you not owe far more to them than ever the best remuneration can pay?

And what if you have left their spiritual state uncared for? Have you said, “Oh, it is no business of mine what they do with their Sundays. I do not care what they do when they are out of the mill, or away from the workshop”? What? Sirs, do you think that as those hundreds of souls go before God they will lay no impeachment against you? Do you think they will not arraign you at God’s bar? I tell you, and I think I speak in the Spirit of God when I say this, you shall find that the voices of your neglected workers, the voices of those whom you never sought to bless with spiritual instruction, shall cry against you from the ground!

Would that I had an audience, for the moment, consisting more largely of such persons! There are some here who can, I think, plead exemption, for they have done much to spread spiritual light among those who toil for them. But I do fear they are rather the exception than the rule, and that there are many who think no more of the men that work for them than of their horses–and some not as much. They take as much interest in the spirit of the beast that goes downwards as in the soul of man that goes upwards. Let it be so no more! Employers, contractors, you that have great influence, I do entreat you–shall I fall upon my knees to do it? I could not then do

it more earnestly–see to it that your brothers' blood lie not on your garments throughout eternity!

Oh, there is one sinner who can look upon this in a solemn light! Who is it that has gone down to the pit? You, Man, yonder–who is it that died but a few days ago? The woman that loved you as she loved her own soul! The woman who idolized you–who thought you an angel. Shall I say it before God and to your face?–you ruined her! And what next, Sir? You cast her off as though she were but dirt, and threw her into the kennel with a broken heart. And being there, her god having cast her off–for you were her god–she fell into despair. And despair led to dreadful consequences and to direr ruin, still. She has gone, and you are glad of it–glad of it–for you will hear no more of her now, you say.

Sir, you shall hear of it. You shall hear of it. You shall hear of it! As long as you live her spirit shall haunt you, track you to the filthy joy which you have planned for a future day. And on your death bed she shall be there to twist her fingers in your hair, to tear your soul out of your body, and drag it down to the Hell appointed for such fiends as you–for you spilt her blood, the blood of her that trusted you–a fair, frail thing, worthy to be an angel’s sister. And you pulled her down and made her a devil’s tool! God save you! For if He does not, your damnation shall be seven-fold. Oh, you son of Belial, what shall be your doom when God deals with you as you deserve?

Are these hot words? Not half so hot as I would make them. I would send them hissing into your souls if I were able. Not so much to condemn you, as with the hope that though you cannot make good the mischief you have done, you may yet turn from the error of your ways to seek a Savior's blood and find pardon for this great iniquity! Oh, dear Friends, let us all take something of our text home. When we think of friends who are dead and gone, are there none over whose corpses we must say, "I did not do what I could for this man. I did not do what I could for this woman"?

I know when I go down to the village where I used to preach, and as I look upon the houses, I am apt to question myself–Was I as earnest with the people as I used to be? I can say I hope I never flinched from telling them all the Truth of God, though sometimes it had to be very rudely and roughly spoken. But yet God knows I do sometimes smite myself to think I did not weep over them more and did not entreat them more to be won to Christ.

And you, too, that sit in these pews so often–many of you are joyful converts to Christ–but numbers of you are still unsaved. What if any of you should be able to say at the last, "We trusted our minister. We hung upon his lips. We were never absent. We loved the Sunday, but oh, he did not tell us of our sin. He did not plead with us to be saved. He left us to ourselves–he was cold when his heart should have been hot. He was a man without tears and had a heart without sympathy for us!"

Oh, Sirs, God grant you may never be able to say that of me! God save you, for my soul longs for you. He is my witness how earnestly I long for you all to be in the heart of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Come unto Him! Come unto Him! I let not your blood cry out against me! Oh, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and trust Him! Trust Him now, that you may be saved, and that at last I may be able to say, "Here am I and the children whom You have given me. You have kept them through Your power and they are preserved even to the end. Unto You be glory forever and ever!"

III. We are in the third place, and that only for a moment, TO EXPECT THE JUDGMENT. "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground." It does not cry to a deaf ear but to the ear of One who hears and feels the cry, and will certainly make bare His arm to smite the offender and to avenge the wrong. Seducer, Infidel, Tempter of the young, God hears the cry that goes up against you, and this is its burden–it comes from souls damned through your influence, and they say–"Lord give him his portion with the tormentors. Let him suffer, for we suffer. He slew us, avenge our death!" He will do it and the day shall come when swift destruction shall overtake you, and as with a rod of iron will He break you. As a potter's vessel so will He dash you in pieces, and who shall deliver you out of His hands?

The cry goes up to Heaven against barren, careless, cold-hearted professors, from many in London, untaught and untrained, who are on their beds today in the jaws of death. They cry out, I say, against you, careless Christians, and they say "Lord, take away their privileges from them! Lord, take them away from the Church which they disfigure and dishonor! Lord, take away these trees that bear no leaves for the healing of the nations! Sweep away this salt which has lost its savor! Lord, cast these candles that give no light into the fire! O Lord, take away, take away, once and for all, these cities that are not set on hills but are hidden from the sight of men."

What would you say if God should visit this Church, for instance, and take out of it all of you who are useless? How would the catalog be thinned! How would our lists show here and there the black mark of erasure! Unless you are doing something to win souls, the voice of your brother's blood cries to God from the ground–and it cries that your privileges may be taken away, and the candlestick moved out of its place. And it will be so, my Hearers, it will be so unless all of us arise to serve our Master. We are happy when God prospers us, but if we get many in our midst who do nothing for Christ, we shall have "Ichabod" written on these walls.

The walls that now ring with the song of the multitude shall hear only the wail of a desolate few. The pulpit that now thunders out God's own voice will become a dead, dreary, and voiceless platform. The time will come when your deacons and your elders

shall be no more men of earnest hearts–and when you shall grope as the blind in the midnight and say–“Oh, that God would give us back once more such times as we used to have, which we frittered away through our carelessness, and lost through our lukewarmness.”

Further, how awful must be the cry of this blood from the ground against a minister! I think I hear it, a cry from earth, from Heaven, from Hell–“Hurl him from his pulpit. Tear away his vestments! Snatch the book from his blood-stained hand! Smite upon the mouth the dog that will not bark. Let his corpse fall before men’s eyes. Let him be made a hissing and a byword, because, being made a winner of souls, he dared to trifle, and being made a watchman of a besieged city, he dared to lie down and slumber. Tear him down! Tear him down! Tear him down,” a hundred voices cry! Though he is a bishop or a great man in the Church. Though his eloquence is unrivalled. Though his power is matchless, pluck him down from his high places–miscreant that he is, to waste men’s time–and ruin men’s souls forever!"

And what shall the cry be against you who still continue by your ill-example to lead others into sin–open Sinners and Infidels? It would be an awful thing to pray for a man’s damnation. But there are some people I know of who while they live do so much mischief, that if they were dead, men would breathe more freely. I know a village where there lives a man who contaminates half the

population. There is a sneer upon his face at which virtue blushes. There is a sneer at which even courage quails. He is a wretch so well taught, and so deeply instructed in the highest science of iniquity, that wherever he may go, he finds none a match for him– either in his reasoning or in the infamous conclusions which he draws. He is a deadly upas tree, dropping black poison upon all beneath his shadow.

I did think once I would half pray that the man might die and go to his doom, but one must not. And yet, were he gone, the saints might say, "It is well," and as over Babylon, when she is destroyed, and the smoke of her torment goes up forever, the saints will say "Hallelujah." So have I thought that over these against whom the blood of many young people cries to God from the ground, when they go, at last, to their doom, men might almost say, Hallelujah, for God has judged the great sinner who did make the people of the earth drunk with the wine of his fornication.

IV. I hope that these terrible things have prepared our minds to hear better THE VOICE OF EXHORTATION.

If there is the voice of blood crying against us today, and we affirm that none of us can altogether escape from it, what shall we do to be rid of the past? Can tears of repentance do it? No. Can promises of amendment make a blank page where there are so many blots and blurs? Ah, no! Nothing that we can do can put away our sin. But may not the future atone? May not future zeal

wipe out past carelessness? May not the endeavor of our life that is yet to come make amends for the indolence or vice of the life that is past? No. The blood of our Brethren has been shed, and we cannot gather it up. The mischief we have done is not to be retrieved!

O God! Souls that are lost through us cannot be saved now. The gates of Hell are so shut that they can never be opened. We can make no restitution. The redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceases forever. The sin is not to be washed away by repentance, nor retrieved by reformation. What then? Hopeless despair for you, and I, and everyone of us, were it not that there is another blood–the blood of One called Jesus–that cries from the ground, too, and the voice of that blood is, “Father, forgive them! Father, forgive them!” I hear a voice that says, “Vengeance, vengeance, vengeance,” like the voice of Jonah in Nineveh, enough to make every man clothe himself in sackcloth.

But a sweeter, and a louder cry comes up–“Mercy, mercy, mercy.” And the Father bows His head and says, “Whose blood is that?” And the voice replies, “It is the blood of Your only Begotten, shed on Calvary for sin. The Father lays His thunders by, sheathes His sword, stretches out His hands and cries to you, the sons of men, "Come unto Me and I will have mercy upon you. Turn, turn. I will pour out My Spirit upon you, and you shall live.” “Repent and believe the Gospel.” Hate the sin that is past, and trust in Jesus for

the future. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. For the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleans us from all sin.

Flee, Sinner, flee! The avenger of the blood that you have shed pursues you with hot haste, with feet that are winged–with a heart that is athirst for blood, he pursues you. Run, Man, run! The City of Refuge is before you. It is there, along the narrow way of faith. Fly, Man, fly, for unless you reach that city before he overtake you, he shall smite you and one blow shall be your everlasting ruin. For God's sake, do not loiter, Man! Those flowers on the left-hand side, care not for them. You will dye that field with your blood if you linger there!

That ale house on the right hand? Stay for none of these things. He comes! Listen! His footsteps on the hard highway! He comes, he comes, he comes now! Oh, that now you may pass the portals of the City of Refuge! Trust the Son of God, and sin is forgiven, and you have entered into everlasting life.

Good Lord, add Your blessing! We are powerless. We can say no more. For Christ's sake, "by His agony and bloody sweat, by His Cross and passion, by His precious death and burial," bless these souls. Amen.

Ge 4:10; Heb 12:24 • The Blood of Abel and the Blood of Jesus

SERMON 0708

T*he Blood of Abel and the Blood of Jesus*

"And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

Genesis 4:10

"And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Hebrews 12:24

THE first shedding of human blood was a very terrible experiment. Whether Cain's murderous blow was premeditated or not, the sight of a bleeding human corpse must have been a terrible novelty to him. He had not been hardened by reading details of warfare, or listening to tales of murder. Killing and slaying were

new terrors to mankind, and he who was the ringleader in such violence must have been filled with mingled astonishment at the result of his blow, and apprehension as to its consequences.

I think I see him standing there by the corpse, for a moment stiff with affright, awe-struck at the sight of blood. Will the skies dart malignant fires upon him? Will the sodden earth produce speedy avengers from her astonished soil? What questions must have flashed through the murderer's mind!

But lo! the warm lifeblood flows in a crimson stream upon the earth, and some ghastly comfort arises to the mind of the guilty wretch as he observes the earth soak in the blood. It stands not in a pool, but the earth opens her mouth to receive and to conceal his brother's blood. Sad memorials bespatter the herbage and crimson the soil, but still the dreadful flood is drying up, and the murderer feels a momentary joy.

Perhaps Cain went his way dreaming that the terrible matter was all over. He had done the deed, and it could not be undone. He had struck the blow, ridden himself of the presence of one who was obnoxious to him. The blood had been swallowed up by the earth, and that was the end to the business which need cause no further thought.

There was no machinery in those days of police, and law, and judges, and gallows, and therefore Cain had little or nothing to fear. Strong and hale man, with no one to punish him, and nobody to

accuse or upbraid him, except his father and his mother, and those, possibly, too bowed with grief and too mindful of their own offense to show much resentment toward their firstborn. He may therefore have imagined that the deed was speechless and silent, and that now oblivion would cover his crime, so that he might go his way as though the deed were never done.

It was not so however, for though that blood was silent in the seared conscience of Cain, it had a voice elsewhere. A mysterious voice went up beyond the skies. It reached the ear of the Invisible, and moved the heart of Eternal Justice, so that breaking through the veil which conceals the Infinite from man, God revealed Himself and spoke to Cain, "What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." Then Cain knew that blood could not be idly spilt, that murder would be avenged, for there was a tongue in every drop of the vital essence which flowed from murdered manhood, which prevailed with God, so that He would interpose and hold a solemn inquest thereon.

Brethren, that was a more terrible experiment still which was tried at Calvary, when not the first man was slaughtered but the Son of God Himself. He who was man but yet was more than man, God manifest in the flesh. It was a dread experiment when having dragged Him before Pilate's judgment seat and falsely condemned Him, having shouted, "Away with him, away with him," they actually dared to take the nails and fasten the Son of God to the

accursed tree, to lift up His body between earth and heaven, and there to watch its griefs till they ended in His death, when they pierced His side and forthwith flowed thereout blood and water.

No doubt Pilate, who had washed his hands in water, thought that no mischief would come of it. The scribes and Pharisees went their way, and said, "We have silenced the accusing voice. There will no more be heard in our streets the cry of Him who said, 'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.' We shall no longer be disturbed in our hypocrisy and formality by the presence of a pure and holy being, whose simple honesty shall be a stern rebuke to us. We have murdered Him, we have put Him to death without just reason, but that is the end of it. There will be no voice to that blood."

Little did they know that up to heaven the cry of Jerusalem had already gone, "His blood be on us, and on our children," was registered in the tablets of justice, and ere long Jerusalem became the treasure house of woe and a den of misery, so that the like to her destruction has not been, neither ever shall be, upon the face of the earth.

Far more delightful is the fact that another and more melodious cry went up to heaven from the cross of Calvary. "Father, forgive them," resounded from the wounds of Immanuel. The blood of Abel was not voiceless, and the blood of Jesus was not dumb. It

cried so as to be heard amid the thrones of heaven, and blessed be God, it spoke for us and not against us.

It spoke not worse things, as it might well have done, but better things than that of Abel. It did not demand fiercer vengeance than that which fell upon Cain, it did not ask that we might be driven vagabonds and fugitives upon the face of the earth, and to be at last banished from God into hell forever, but it cried, "Father, forgive them," and it prevailed and the curse was taken away, and a blessing came to the sons of men.

This morning we propose to keep our discourse to the subject of the voice of the blood of Abel and the voice of the blood of Jesus, as standing in comparison the one with the other. They both spoke. That is evident. Abel being dead yet speaketh, saith the apostle, and we know to our abiding comfort that the blood of Jesus pleads before the eternal throne.

All blood has a voice, for God is jealous of its preservation, the blood of excellent and just men has a more heavenly speech still, but the voice of the blood of Jesus far surpasses all, and among ten thousand voices it bears the palm.

In the first place, JESUS' BLOOD SPEAKS BETTER THINGS IN GENERAL.

What did the blood of Abel say? Was it not the blood of testimony? When Abel fell to the ground beneath his brother's club, he bore witness to spiritual religion. Cain was the lover of a

merely outward worship, in which faith had no place. He loved a worship of show and pomp, he garnished the altar with fruits and decked it with flowers. His was a religion of taste and elegance, a religion of his own devising, but it was devoid of a humble, believing, spiritual reference to the promised Deliverer.

Abel stood there the professor of an ungamished religion of faith in the promised sacrifice. On the altar was a lamb, bleeding from its death wound, and laid in order for burning, a ghastly spectacle not to be delighted in by taste, a thing from which the lovers of the beautiful would turn away.

Abel had chosen such an offering because God had chosen it, and because it was the fit means for leading his faith to its true object, the Lord Jesus. He saw by faith in the bleeding lamb the memorial of the Lord's great propitiation for sin, which could not be seen in Cain's offering of the fruits of the earth, however tasteful that offering might be.

Abel stands forth before us as the first in a cloud of witnesses, bearing brave testimony, and prepared to seal it with their lives. He died a martyr for the truth, the grandly God-like truth that God accepts men according to their faith. All honor to the martyr's blood which speaks so effectually for the precious truth.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, being also a testifier and witness for the faith of God, spoke better things than Abel, because He had more to speak, and spoke from more intimate acquaintance with God. He

was a fuller witness of divine truth than Abel could be, for He brought life and immortality to light, and told His people clearly of the Father. Our Lord Jesus Christ had been in the bosom of the Father, and knew the divine secret. This secret He revealed to the sons of men in His ministry, and then He sealed it by His blood.

It is not to be forgotten that though the death of Christ was in chief an atonement for sin, yet it was also a testimony to the truth, for He is said to be a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people, and as a dying, bleeding martyr, it will be clear to you that this blood testifies to fuller, brighter, and more glorious truth than did the blood of Abel.

Moreover, the blood of Abel spoke good things in that it was the proof of faithfulness. This dear servant of the Great Master was faithful under his brother's opposition, yea, faithful unto death. It could not be said of him as the apostle said of certain others, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin." He resisted sin even unto blood. He was faithful in all his house as a servant. He turned not from his integrity, but counted not his life dear unto him. His blood as it fell to the ground spoke this good thing—it said, "Great God, Abel is faithful to Thee."

But the blood of Jesus Christ testifies to yet greater faithfulness still, for it was the sequel of a spotlessly perfect life, which no act of sin had ever defiled. Whereas Abel's death furnished, it is true, a life of faith, but not a life of perfection. The faithfulness of Jesus

was complete from the day of His birth to the hour of His death. And inasmuch as He needed not otherwise to die, His voluntary yielding up of life was all the more an act of obedience, and the better proof of His fidelity to His trust.

Moreover, we must never forget that all that Abel's blood could say as it fell to the ground was but the shadow of that more glorious substance to which Jesus' death assures us. Jesus did not typify atonement, but offered it. He was not the representative of sacrifice, He was the great Sacrifice itself, and inasmuch as the substance must ever excel the shadow, the blood of Jesus Christ speaketh better things than that of Abel.

It is well to add that our Lord's person was infinitely more worthy and glorious than that of Abel, and consequently His death must yield to us a more golden-mouthed discourse than the death of a mere man like Abel. He who dies at the hand of Cain is but one of our race, testifying to truth and righteousness, testifying by faith to a sacrifice to come, but He who died at the hand of Herod and of Pilate was divine, and came upon no common errand, with no ordinary message to deliver.

When the glorious Son of God bowed His head and gave up the ghost, the voice that arose from His blood must necessarily have been louder, sweeter, more full, and more Godlike than the voice of the martyred Abel's gore. We understand then, before coming to

details, that on general principles we may be pretty clear that the blood of Jesus would speak better things than that of Abel.

Now we will enter the very heart of our text, while we remember that THE BLOOD OF JESUS SPEAKS BETTER THINGS TO GOD than the blood of Abel did.

The blood of Abel cried in the ears of the Lord, for thus He said to Cain, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." That cry did not go round to seek a mediator, but went directly to the judgment seat of God, and laid an accusation against the murderer.

Now what did Abel's blood say to God? Standing by the spot where Abel fell, and marking the ground all crimson with clotted gore, what would the blood seem to you to say? What would be your own reflection? What would you conceive that the blood said to God?

It said just this, "O God, one of Your own creatures, the product of Your matchless skill, has been dashed in pieces, and barbarously destroyed. A living, sensitive body formed by art and skill, such as only You could show, has been wantonly broken. The potter will not bear, that the vessel which has been fashioned upon the wheel with much cost and labor should be wantonly broken, but here is a body far more costly, far more wonderful than anything which human art could create, and this has been destroyed. Great God, the Creator of all things, will You look on this with patience, will You

bear to see the work of Your own hands most cruelly destroyed?" Was there not much in this cry?

Then that blood would plead still further, "O God, Your creature has been destroyed without cause. No just reason of provocation has been given, no offense has been committed which could deserve so terrible a stroke. But one of Your feeble creatures who has a claim upon Your kind protection has been wantonly and needlessly slain—his blood appeals to You! You Judge of all the earth, will You let the weak be trodden down by the strong, and will You suffer the innocent to be smitten by the fierce hand of the wicked?"

You see the cry gathers force. At first it is, "O God, Your creature has been destroyed." Next it is, "O God, Your subject has been maltreated by one of his fellow subjects, by one who has become Your enemy, will You not interfere?" Yet the blood of Abel said more than this, it said, "O God, the blood shed here was shed for You."

It seemed to say, "If it were not for love of You this blood had not been shed! If these drops had not been consecrated by devotion, if this blood had not flowed in the veins of a man who loved God with all his heart it had not been poured out upon the ground. O God," cries every drop, "I fell upon the ground for You—will You endure this? Shall a creature that You have made yield up its life with pain and anguish for You, and will You be like a cold,

motionless, unmoved, immovable statue, and look on without emotion? Will You not bestir Yourself, O God? Shall blood be shed on Your own behalf, shed unjustly too, the blood of Your own loving, righteous creature, and will You not interfere?"

What force there is in such a voice! Yet the blood added to this, "O God, I have been shed in defiance of You," for the stroke which came from Cain's hand was not aimed merely at Abel, it was in spirit aimed at God, for if Cain could have done the same to God as he did to his brother Abel, he doubtless would have done it.

He was of that wicked one, and therefore slew his brother, and the wickedness which was in him was Deicidal. He would have slain God Himself if it had been in his power, and so the blood cried, "O God, here is the gauntlet of defiance thrown down to Yourself. Cain defies You. He has struck the first blow at Yourself, he has smitten down the vanguard of the army of Your elect. Will You look on in quiet? Will You take no vengeance? Will You have no regard? Shall there be silence in heaven when there are groans and cries on earth? Shall heaven's heart be cold when the heart of the enemy is hot with rage and fierce with rebellion? O God, will You not interpose?"

Surely this is a heaven-piercing cry, but this is not all. The blood of the proto-martyr added to all this such an appeal as the following —"O God, this is the first of human blood that has been murderously shed, and shed by an unnatural brother's hand. Will

You pass this by? Then how can You be just? Did not this blood challenge the very existence of justice in God? O God, if You do not punish this first barbarous man-slayer, who kills his brother, than all adown the ages men will riot in blood and wanton in murder, and they will say, 'How doth God know?' He that sitteth in the heavens regardeth not, He will not so much as speak."

It were as though God should issue a license for man to shed each other's blood, and give permission for red-handed murder to lord it over the whole creation, if the first murder should pass unnoticed by the great Judge of all.

Do you hear, my brethren, what a cry the blood of Abel must have had, and with what power it arose to heaven? But we are not left to conjecture as to the power of that cry, for we are told that God heard, and when He heard it He came to reckoning with Cain and He said, "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the ground."

Then came the withering sentence of it. The ground which had drank in the blood became accursed to Cain, so that delve it as he might it could not yield him a bounteous harvest, plough it as he would, with all his skill and craft, it never could yield its strength to him. The original curse of the thorn and the thistle, which had fallen upon it when Adam survived, was now doubled to Cain so that he reaped but handfuls and gathered scanty sheaves.

This would be a constant bitter mingled with his daily bread, while over and above that, he received unto his heart a curse which made him the slave of his own dreads. He served fear and trembling as his gods, and went about the earth with darkness within him and darkness round about him, never more rejoicing, but wearing the mark of reprobation fixed upon his brow. His life was doubtless hell upon earth, and at last he was driven forever from the presence of the Most High God. Blood has a voice in it, and when it is heard against a man it brings upon him a curse untold.

Well now, brethren, it is a very sweet task to ask you to turn your minds away from the blood of Abel to the blood of Jesus. I feel persuaded that you did just now recognize the voice of Abel's blood, and I want your minds to hear with equal distinctness the voice of Jesus Christ's blood, for there are the same reasons for its loudness, but they are all far more emphatic.

Can you stand at Calvary now and view the flowing of the Savior's blood from hands, and feet, and side? What are your own reflections as to what that blood says to God? Think now at the cross-foot. That blood crieth with a loud voice to God, and what doth it say?

Does it not say this? "O God, this time it is not merely a creature which bleeds, but though the body that hangs upon the cross is the creature of Your Holy Spirit, it is Your own Son who now pours out

His soul unto death. O God, it is Your only begotten One, dear to Yourself, essentially one with You, one in whom You are well pleased, whose obedience is perfect, whose love to You has been unwavering—it is He who dies. O God, will You despise the cries and the tears, the groans, the moans, the blood of Your own Son? Most tender Father, in whose bosom Jesus lay from the foundations of the earth, He dies, and will You not regard Him? Shall His blood fall to the ground in vain?"

Then, moreover, the voice would plead, "It is not only Your Son, but Your perfectly innocent Son, in whom was no necessity for dying, because He had no original sin which would have brought corruption on Him, who had moreover no actual sin, who throughout life had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds. O God, it is Your only-begotten, who, without a fault, is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and stands like a sheep before her shearers. Can You see it, You God of all, can You see the infinitely holy and just Son of Your heart led here to die—can You see it, and not feel the force of the blood as it cries to You?"

Was there not added to this fact that our Lord died to vindicate the honor of His Father? "For You, O God, for You He dies! He who hangs on Calvary hangs there in deference to Your own decree, in fulfillment of Your own purpose, in vindication of the honor of Your law, that You may Yourself be glorified, that Your justice may have full scope, and Your mercy may have illimitable sway. O God,

the sufferer, pale in death, whose wounds are torn open with the cruel nails, and whose soul is racked with pain unutterable, dies for You.

"If there had been no God, He need not die. If there were no law to vindicate, no truth to defend, no honor, and majesty, and justice to which to pay homage, it need not that He died. If You were content to stain Your honor or to restrain Your mercy, there were no need that He should give Himself. But it is for You, for You each pang, for You each groan, for You each drop of blood, and will You not be moved thereby?"

Brethren, is there not power in this voice? Yet over and above this the blood must have pleaded thus with God—"O God, the blood which is now being shed, thus honorable and glorious in itself, is being poured out with a motive which is divinely gracious. He who dies on this cross dies for His enemy, groans for those who make Him groan, suffers for those who thrust the dart into His soul, and then mock at the agony which they themselves have caused. O God, it is a chain for God in heaven which binds the victim to the horns of the altar, a chain of everlasting love, of illimitable goodness."

Now, dear friends, you and I could not see a man suffer out of pure benevolence without being moved by his sufferings, and shall God be unmoved? the perfectly holy and gracious God, shall He be indifferent where you and I are stirred to deep emotion?

The sight of blood makes some of us shudder. The sight of blood shed from an innocent person— shed by the hand of violence— would make our very souls chill within us. But the thought of that blood being shed with a motive so marvelous, because of a disinterested affection towards undeserving criminals—this would move us indeed, and do you dream that it did not move the heart of God?

Blessed be His name, we are not left to conjecture here, it so moved our heavenly Father that to this day God has come to man, and speaking to us through that blood He has said, "What hast thou done? Whatever you have done, however black and filthy your sin may have been, the voice of My Son's blood cries unto Me from the ground, and now from this day forth I have taken off the curse from the earth for His sake, neither will I curse it any more. You shall be blessed in your basket and in your store, in your going out and in your coming in. I have forgiven you your iniquities. I have set a mark upon you, and no man shall hurt you, neither shall justice smite you, for in the person of My dear Son I have received and accepted you, guilty as you are.

"Go your way, and live happily and peaceably, for I have taken away your iniquities and cast your sins behind My back, and the day has come in the which if your sins be searched for they shall not be found, yea, if they be sought out they shall not be, saith the Lord, for I have pardoned them whom I have reserved." Abel's

blood had mighty prevalence to curse, but Jesu's blood has prevalence to bless the sons of men.

I want you to stay a little over this thought to digest it. I wish I had the power to send it home, only the Holy Ghost, however, can do that. I want, however, just to dwell on it that you may get into the soul of it. Observe that the blood of Abel spoke to God long before Cain spoke. Cain was deaf to the voice of his brother's blood, but God heard it.

Sinner, long before you hear the blood of Jesus, God hears it, and spares your guilty soul. Long before that blood comes into your soul to melt you to repentance, it pleads for you with God. It was not the voice of Cain that brought down vengeance, but the voice of Abel's blood. And it is not the cry of the sinner seeking mercy that is the cause of mercy, it is the cry of that blood of Jesus.

I know you will tell me you cannot pray. Oh what a mercy it is that the blood can, and when you cannot plead so as to prevail, the blood pleads. If you are to win mercy from God and get forgiveness, it will not be by the efficacy of your prayers and tears, but through the efficacy of that blood of God's dear Son. Cain did not ask for vengeance, but it came unsought through the blood, and you, though you feel as if you hardly dare look for mercy, yet shall find it if you can trust the blood of Jesus which speaks for you.

The blood does not need your voice to increase its power with God. He will hear your voice, but it is because He hears the blood

of Jesus first of all. It is a mercy for us that the blood of Jesus Christ speaks for the guilty, even as the blood of Abel spoke against the guilty. Jesus' blood pleads not for the innocent, if such there be, they need no plea from an atoning sacrifice. Jesus pleads for the rebellious that the Lord God may dwell among them, for you that have broken His laws, and despised His love, and fought against His power, the blood of Jesus pleads for such as you, for He came into the world to save sinners. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

The precious blood speaks constantly. Did you notice that word in the text? "which speaketh" not "which did speak," but "which speaketh." The blood of Jesus pleaded for the thief upon the cross, but it—

"Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransom 'd church of God
Be saved to sin no more."

Brother, when prevailing sin oppresses the conscience, it is a thousand mercies to know that we have even now a prevailing Savior. Years ago some of us came to Christ and we found pardon, but our faith occasionally faints, and our doubts grow strong. Come, let us go afresh to the fountain, let us look anew to the cross, for the blood speaks still. Still in effect our Lord Jesus bleeds today as much as He did eighteen hundred years ago, for the blood is just as certain in its power with God at the present moment as when the

thief said, “Lord, remember me.” Let us think of this and rejoice in this.

My soul, when you cannot plead with God, when you dare not, when your tongue is silent, and despair gags your mouth, even then Jesus pleads. Now lay you hold upon the intercession, come and cast yourself upon Him, rest wholly in Him, He must prevail though you cannot, he must succeed though you have no power whatsoever.

Come then, and link yourself with the infallible prevalent plea of the precious blood, and it is all well with you, all safe with you, and safe forever. God grant us grace to do this, each one of us, and His be the praise!

Furthermore, JESUS’ BLOOD SPEAKS BETTER THINGS TO US IN OUR OWN HEARTS than did the blood of Abel.

I suppose most of you read the account written by the newspaper correspondents who have passed over the battlefields of Koniggratz or Sadowa. How it thrilled one to read of ditches filled with blood, and of the smell from putrid corpses being so intolerable that travelers were fain to leave the battlefield in haste. I would not like to be Bismarck, nor the Crown Prince of Prussia, nor the King, nor anyone who had a hand in a war so sanguinary and so unjustifiable.

I suppose that wholesale assassins grow used to such things. I suppose that they can read of thousands mangled by shot and shell

without emotion, and even see the heaps of corpses without a shudder, but I am certain of this, that it would drive me mad.

Ah! to have the blood of one person knowingly laid at my door would be enough to dash all comfort from my life, but to have the blood of tens of thousands poured out to gratify my ambition, I think must make reason reel at once. It must be an absence of conscience which makes reason to keep her throne when men have been wading through their fellows' blood for mere purposes of selfish gain.

Seeing that there had been no wars in Cain's day, and that the human heart had not been brutalized as it now is, so as to speak of war as we now do in such gentle terms, surely if he had had any conscience at all, it must have been a horrible thought to him that he had killed his brother. "I have killed a man, I have shed his blood." Surely it made him start in his sleep. How could he be quiet upon his lonely couch? That red-handed man! Guilt, a grim chamberlain, with fingers bloody red would surely draw the curtains of his bed.

Would not the spectacle all come up before his mind? The talk in the field, the sudden impulse, the blow, the blood, the look of his victim as he cried for pity as one cruel stroke succeeded another, and then the sight of the ghastly body and the streaming blood, and the crimson marks on the soddened earth.

Oh, it must have been a remembrance clinging like a viper around the murderer wherever he might be! He might well build a city, as we are told he did, in order to quench these fiery remembrances. Then would the thought come upon him, "You slew him though he was your brother." "Am I my brother's keeper?" said he, but men can talk sometimes more braggingly than their heart talks in secret.

The horror of brother-killing must have haunted Cain, "I slew my brother, I, the first that was born of woman slew the second born." And then it would be suggested, "And wherefore did I slay him? What evil had he done me? What if he did offer a different sacrifice from mine, and what if God did accept him and not me, yet what hurt had he done me?"

The innocence of his victim, if Cain had any conscience, must have increased his uneasiness, for he would recollect how inoffensively he had kept those sheep of his, and had been like one among them, so lamblike, that shepherd man himself, a true sheep of God's pasture. "Yet," Cain would say, "I slew him because I hated God, the God before whose bar I am soon to stand, the God who set this mark on me."

Can you picture the man who had thus to be daily schooled and upbraided by his brother's blood? It needs a poet's mind to teach him. Think how you would feel if you had killed your own brother, how the guilt would hang over you like a black cloud, and drop horror into your very soul.

Now, brethren, there is more than equal force in the cry of the blood of Jesus, only it acts differently, and it speaks better things. Let it be remembered however, that it speaks those better things with the same force. Comforts arise from the blood of Jesus as powerful as the horrors which arose from the blood of Abel.

When the sinner looks to Jesus slain, he may well say, "If I did not know that all this blood was shed for me as well as by me, my fears would multiply a thousand fold, but when I think that that precious blood is blood shed instead of mine, that it is blood which God planned and ordained should be shed for me from before the foundation of the world, when I think that that is the blood of God's own dear Son, whom He has smitten instead of smiting me, making Him bear the whole of His wrath that I might not bear it, O my God, what comforts come streaming from this blessed fountain!"

Just in proportion as thought of murder would make Cain wretched, in the same proportion ought faith to make you happy as you think upon Jesus Christ slain, For the blood of Christ, as I said at the beginning of the sermon, cannot have a less powerful voice. It must have a more powerful voice than that of Abel, and it cries therefore more powerfully for you than the blood of Abel cried against his brother Cain.

Oh, then, my clamoring sins, I can hear you, but I am not afraid of you, for the blood of Jesus speaks louder than you all. Oh, then,

conscience, I can hear your accusation, but I am not alarmed, for my Savior died. I come before God with perfect confidence, because sprinkled with the blood of my Substitute. If the horror of Cain with an awakened conscience might be unendurable, so the peace which comes to me through the precious blood of Jesus is indescribable and unutterable, a peace like a river, a righteousness like the waves of the sea.

Sweet peace have all they who hear the blood speaking in their souls, telling them that sin is forgiven, that God is reconciled, that we are accepted in the Beloved, and that now we are preserved in Christ Jesus and shall never perish, neither shall any pluck us out of His hand. I trust you know, I know many of you do, the sweet power of this peace-speaking blood. Such innocent blood, ordained on purpose to give peace, is precious beyond all price.

O my soul! never look for peace elsewhere, and never be afraid of finding peace here. If today, O Christian, you have lost your confidence, if today you are conscious of having been false to your Lord, and of having done despite to His Spirit, if today you feel ashamed of the very name of a Christian because you have dishonored it, if today despair is ready to strangle your hope, and you are tempted to give it all up, yet come now, even now, to this precious blood.

Do not think that my Savior can save merely the little sinners, He is a great Savior—mighty to save. I know your sins speak very

loudly—ah! well they may. I hope you will hear their voices and hate them in the future—but they cannot speak so loudly as the blood of Jesus does. It says, "Father, Father, shall I die in vain? Father, I paid My blood for sinners, shall not sinners be saved? I was smitten for the guilty, shall the guilty be smitten too?"

The blood says, "O God, I have vindicated Your law, what more do You demand? I have honored Your justice, why should You cast the sinner into hell? O You Divine Benignity! can You take two exactions for one offense, and punish those for whom Jesus suffered? O Justice! will you here avenge? O Mercy! when the way is cleared, will you not run to guilty sinners? O Love Divine, when the pathway is opened for You, will You not show Yourself to the rebellious and the vile?"

The blood shall not plead in vain, sinners shall be saved, and you and I, I hope, among them to the praise and glory of His grace.

Two or three words to close with. JESUS' BLOOD, EVEN IN MY TEXT, SPEAKS BETTER THINGS THAN THAT OF ABEL.

It speaks the same things but in a better sense. Did you notice the first text? God said unto Cain, "What hast thou done?" Now that is what Christ's blood says to you, "What hast thou done?" My dear hearer, do you not know that your sins slew the Savior? If we have been playing with sin, and fancied it to be a very little thing, a trifle to play with and laugh at, let us correct the mistake. Our Savior hangs on the cross, and was nailed there by those sins of ours. Shall

we think little of them? Looking from the cross, Jesus says to us, “What hast thou done?” O my hearer, what hast thou done? You have slain your best friend and ruined yourself!

Let me come home personally to everyone. Make an inventory now of your sins. Go over the black list from your childhood till now. What hast thou done? Ah! Lord, done enough to make me weep forever if it were not that You have wept for me. Drops of grief can never repay the debt which is due to Your blood. Alas! I have done evil, Lord, but You have done good to me. “What hast thou done? What hast thou done?” was a dreadful accusation to Cain, it might have gone through him like a dart, but to you and to me it is the soft inquiring voice of a Father’s love bringing us to repentance. May it bring us now!

What I want mainly to indicate is this. If you notice in the second text, this blood is called “the blood of sprinkling." Whether Abel’s blood sprinkled Cain or not I cannot say, but if it did it must have added to his horror to have had the blood actually upon him.

But this adds to the joy in our case, for the blood of Jesus is of little value to us until it is sprinkled upon us. Faith dips the hyssop in the atoning blood and sprinkles it upon the soul, and the soul is clean. The application of the blood of Jesus is the true ground of joy, and the sure source of Christian comfort. The application of the blood of Abel must have been horror, but the application of the blood of Jesus is the root and ground of all delight.

There is another matter in the text with which I conclude. The apostle says, “We are come to the blood of sprinkling.” He mentions that among other things to which we have come. Now, from the blood of Abel every reasonable man would flee. He that has murdered his fellow desires to put a wide distance between himself and the accusing corpse.

But we come to the blood of Jesus. It is a topic in which we delight as our contemplations bring us nearer and nearer to it. I ask you, dear Christian friends, to come nearer to it this morning than ever you have been. Think over the great truth of substitution. Portray to yourselves the sufferings of the Savior. Dwell in His sight, sit at the foot of Calvary, abide in the presence of His cross, and never turn away from that great spectacle of mercy and of misery.

Come to it, be not afraid. Ho, ye sinners, who have never trusted Jesus, look ye hither and live! May you come to Him now!

“Come, guilty souls, and flee away, Like doves to Jesus’ wounds.”

Nay, do not run away from the wounds which you have made, but find shelter in them, forget the sufferings of Christ, but rest in them! Your only hope lies in trusting in Jesus, resting wholly upon Him. Think much of the griefs of your Lord, and if I might suggest to some of you who will not be coming out this afternoon, perhaps if you could spend an hour or two between services in considering

the sufferings of the Savior, those considerations might be the means of bringing faith to you.

Faith comes by hearing, but it is a thoughtful hearing, and hearing comes by the Word of God, but the Word must be thought over. Open the Word, read the story of the cross. Ask the Master to bless it to you, and who knows but through the divine Spirit some of you may yet hear the voice of that blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel. The Lord bless every one of you for His name's sake. Amen.

Ge 5:21-24; Heb 11:5,6; Jude 1:14 • Enoch

SERMON 1307

E*noch*

"And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God, after he begat Methuselah, three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

Genesis 5:21-24

THE three passages of Scripture which I have read are all the authentic information we have concerning Enoch. It would be idle to supplement it with the fictions of ancient commentators. Enoch is called the seventh from Adam, to distinguish him from the other Enoch of the line of Cain, who was the third from Adam. In the

first Patriarchs God was pleased to manifest to men portions of His Truth in reference to true religion. These men of the olden times were not only, themselves, taught of God, but they were also teachers of their age and types in whom great Truths of God were exhibited. Abel taught the need of approaching the Lord with sacrifice, the need of the Atonement by blood–he laid the lamb upon the altar and sealed his testimony with his own blood. Atonement is so precious a Truth of God that to die for its defense is a worthy deed and from the very first it is a doctrine which has secured its martyrs, who being dead yet speak.

Then Seth and Enos taught men the necessity of a distinct avowal of their faith in the Lord and the need of assembling for His worship, for we read concerning the days of Enos and Seth, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." Those who worshipped through the atoning Sacrifice separated themselves from the rest of men, assembled a Church in the name of the Lord and worshipped, calling upon the name of Jehovah. The heart must first believe in the great sacrifice with Abel and then the mouth must confess the same with Seth. Then came Enoch whose life went beyond the reception and confession of the Atonement, for he set before men the great Truth of communion with God. He displayed in his life the relation of the Believer to the Most High and showed how near the living God condescends to be to His own

children. May our progress in knowledge be similar to the growth of the Patriarchal teaching!

Brothers and Sisters, you know as Abel did, the sacrificial Lamb. Your confidence is in the precious blood and so by further, and we have called upon the name and are the avowed followers of Jesus. We have given ourselves up to the Lord in the solemn burial of Baptism, when we were baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, because we reckoned ourselves dead in Christ to all the world and risen with Him into newness of life. Henceforth the Divine name is named on us and we are no more our own.

And now we gather together in our Church capacity. We assemble around the table of fellowship, we unite in our meetings for prayer and worship and the center for us all is the name of the Lord. We are separated from the world and set apart to be a people who declare His name. Thus far so good–we have seen the Sacrifice of Jesus as the way with Abel. We have avowed the Truth with Seth. Now let us take the next step and know the life with Enoch. Let us endeavor to walk with God as Enoch did! Perhaps a meditation upon the holy Patriarch's life may help us to imitate it. While considering what he was and under what circumstances he came to be so, we may, by the Holy Spirit, be helped to reach the point to which he attained.

This is the desire of every godly man! All the saints desire communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The constant cry of our soul is to our Lord, “Abide with me.” I buried, yesterday, one of the excellent of the earth who loved and feared and served his God far better than most of us. He was an eminently devout Brother. One of the last wishes of his heart he had committed to writing in a letter to a friend, when he little thought of dying. It was this, “I have longed to realize the life of Enoch and to walk with God.”–

“Oh for a closer walk with God!”

He did but write what you and I feel. If such are your desires, and such I feel sure they are, so surely as you are the Lord’s people, then I hope a consideration of the life of Enoch may help you towards the realization of your wish.

First, then, what does Enoch’s walking with God imply? It is a short description of a man’s life, but there is a mint of meaning in it. Secondly, what circumstances were connected with his remarkable life? These are highly instructive. And thirdly, what was the close of it? It was as remarkable as the life itself.

First, then, WHAT IS MEANT BY ENOCH’S WALKING WITH GOD? Paul helps us with our first observation upon this by his note in Hebrews. His walk with God was a testimony that Enoch was well-pleasing to God. “Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” This is evidently the Apostle’s interpretation

of his walking with God and it is a most correct one, for the Lord will not walk with a man in whom He has no pleasure. Can two walk together, except they are agreed? If men walk contrary to God, He will not walk with them, but contrary to them. Walking together implies amity, friendship, intimacy, love–and these cannot exist between God and the soul unless the man is acceptable unto the Lord.

Doubtless Enoch, like Elijah, was a man of like passions with ourselves. He had fallen with the rest of mankind in the sin of Adam. There was sin about him, as there is sin about us by nature, and he had gone astray in act and deed as all we, like sheep, have done. Therefore he needed pardon and cleansing, even as we do. Then to be pleasing with God it was necessary that he should be forgiven and justified, even as we are–for no man can be pleasing to God till sin is pardoned and righteousness is imputed. To this end there must be faith, for there can be no justification except by faith. And as we have said, already, there is no pleasing God except our persons are justified.

Right well, then, does the Apostle say, "Without faith it is impossible to please God," and by faith Enoch was made pleasing to God, even as we are at this day. This is worthy of earnest notice, Brothers and Sisters, because this way of faith is open to us. If Enoch had been pleasing to God by virtue of some extraordinary gifts and talents, or by reason of marvelous achievements and

miraculous works, we might have been in despair! But if he was pleasing to God through faith, that same faith which saved the dying thief, that same faith which has been worked in you and in me–then the wicket gate at the head of the way in which men walk with God is open to us, also!

If we have faith we may enter into fellowship with the Lord! How this ought to endear faith to us! The highest grades of spiritual life depend upon the lower ones and rise out of them. If you want to walk with God as a man of God, you must begin by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, simply, as a babe in Grace! The highest saintship must commence by the confession of your sinnership, and your laying hold upon Christ Crucified. Not otherwise does the strongest Believer live than the weakest Believer–and if you are to grow to be among the strongest of the Lord's warriors–it must be by faith which lays hold upon Divine strength.

Beginning in the Spirit you are not to be made perfect in the flesh. You are not to proceed a certain distance, by faith in Christ, and then to commence living by your own works–your walk is to continue as it begun. "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk you in Him." Enoch was always pleasing to God, but it was because he always believed and lived in the power of his faith. This is worth knowing and remembering, for we may yet be tempted to strive for some imaginary higher style of religious life by looking to our feelings instead of looking alone to the Lord! We

must not remove our eyes from looking, alone, to Jesus, Himself, even to admire His image within ourselves–for if we do we shall go backward rather than forward. No, Beloved, by faith Enoch became pleasing to God and by faith he walked with God–let us follow in his footprints.

Next, when we read that Enoch walked with God we are to understand that he realized the Divine Presence. You cannot consciously walk with a person whose existence is not known to you. When we walk with a man, we know that he is there. We hear his footsteps if we cannot see his face. We have some very clear perception that there is a person at our side. Now, it we look to Hebrews again, Paul tells us, "He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Enoch's faith, then, was a realizing faith. He did not believe things as a matter of creed and then put them up on the shelf out of the way, as too many of us do today–he was not merely orthodox in his head–but the Truth of God had entered into his heart.

What he believed was true to him, practically true, true as a matter of fact in his daily life. He walked with God–it was not that he merely thought of God, that he speculated about God, that he argued about God, that he read about God, that he talked about God–he walked with God, which is the practical and experimental part of true godliness! In his daily life he realized that God was with him and he regarded Him as a living God, in whom he

confided and by whom he was loved. Oh, Beloved, do you not see that if you are to reach to the highest style of Christian life, you must do it through the realization of those very things which, by faith, you have received?

Grasp them! Let them be to you substance and evidence. Make them sure, look upon them, handle them, taste them in your inmost soul and so know them beyond all question. You must see Him who is invisible and possess that which cannot be as yet enjoyed. Believe not only that God is, but that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, for this, according to Paul, is the Enoch faith! God realized as existing, observing, judging and rewarding human deeds–a real God, really with us–this we must know, or there is no walking with God.

Then, as we read that Enoch walked with God, we have no doubt it signifies that he had very familiar communion with the Most High. I scarcely know a communion that is more free, pleasant and cordial than that which arises out of constant walking with a friend. If I wished to find a man's most familiar friend, it would surely be one with whom he walked daily. If you were to say, "I sometimes go into his house and sit a little while with him," it would not amount to so much as when you can say, "I have, from day to day, walked the fields and climbed the hills with him." In walking, friends become communicative–one tells his trouble and the other strives to console him under it–and then imparts to him his own

secret in return. When persons are constantly in the habit of walking together from choice, you may be quite sure there are many communications between them with which no stranger may intermeddle.

If I wanted to know a man through and through, I should want to walk with him for a time, for walking communion brings out parts of the man which even in domestic life may be concealed. Walking for a continuance implies and engenders close fellowship and great familiarity between friends. But will God, in very deed, thus walk with men? Yes, He did so with Enoch and He has done so with many of His people since. He tells us His secret, the secret of the Lord, which He reveals only to them that fear Him. And we tell Him, alike, our joys in praise, our sorrows in prayer and our sins in confession. The heart unloads itself of all its cares into the heart of Him that cares for us! And the Lord pours forth His floods of goodness as He imparts to His beloved ones a sense of His own everlasting love to them. This is the very flower and sweetness of Christian experience, its lily and its rose, its calamus and myrrh. If you would taste the cream of Christian life, it is found in having a realizing faith and entering into intimate communion with the heavenly Father. So Enoch walked with God.

Next it is implied in the term, "walked," that his communion with God was continuous. As an old Divine has well remarked, he did not take a turn or two with God and then leave His company, but he

walked with God for hundreds of years! It is implied in the text that this was the tenor of his life throughout the whole of its 365 years. Enoch walked with God after Methuselah had been born, 300 years, and doubtless he had walked with Him before. What a splendid walk! A walk of 300 years! One might desire a change of company if he walked with anybody else, but to walk with God for three centuries was so sweet that the Patriarch kept on with his walk until he walked beyond time and space–and walked into Paradise–where he is still marching on in the same Divine society! He had Heaven on earth and it was, therefore, not so amazing that he glided away from earth to Heaven so easily.

He did not commune with God by fits and starts, but he abode in the conscious love of God. He did not, now and then, climb to the heights of elevated piety and then descend into the marshy valley of lukewarmness, but he continued in the calm, happy, equable enjoyment of fellowship with God from day to day. Night with its sleep did not suspend it. Day with its cares did not endanger it. It was not a run, a rush, a leap, a spurt, but a steady walk. On, on, through three happy centuries and more did Enoch continue to walk with God!

It is implied, also, in this phrase that his life was progressive, for if a man walks either by himself or with anybody else, he makes progress, he goes forward. Enoch walked with God. At the end of 200 years he was not where he began. He was in the same

Company, but he had gone forward in the right way. At the end of the third hundred years Enoch enjoyed more, understood more, loved more, had received more and could give out more, for he had gone forward in all respects. A man who walks with God will necessarily grow in Grace and in the knowledge of God and in likeness to Christ. You cannot suppose a perpetual walk with God, year after year, without the favored person being strengthened, sanctified, instructed and rendered more able to glorify God.

So I gather that Enoch's life was a life of spiritual progress. He went from strength to strength and made headway in the gracious pilgrimage. May God grant us to be pressing onward, ourselves. Suffer a few more observations upon Enoch's walk. In "Kitto's Daily Bible Pleadings" there is an exceedingly pleasing piece illustrating what it must be to walk with God by the figure of a father's taking his little son by the hand and walking forth with him upon the breezy hills. Kitto says, "As that child walks with you, so do you walk with God. That child loves you now. The world–the cold and cruel world–has not yet come between his heart and yours. His love, now, is the purest and most beautiful he will ever feel, or you will ever receive. Cherish it well, and as that child walks lovingly with you, so do you walk lovingly with God."

It is a delight to such children with their fathers. The roughness of the way or of the weather is nothing to them–it is joy enough to go for a walk with father. There is a warm, tender, affectionate grip of

the hand and a beaming smile of the eyes as they look up to father while he conducts them over hill and dale. Such a walk is humble, too, for the child looks upon its father as the greatest and wisest man that ever lived! He considers him to be the incarnation of everything that is strong and wise. All that his father says or does he admires. As he walks along, he feels the utmost affection for his father, but his reverence is equally strong. He is very near his father, but yet he is only a child, and looks up to his father as his king.

Moreover such a walk is one of perfect confidence. The boy is not afraid of missing his way. He trusts implicitly his father's guidance. His father's arm will screen him from all danger and, therefore, he does not so much as give it a thought–why should he? If care is needed as to the road, it is his father's business to see to it and the child, therefore, never dreams of anxiety–why should he? If any difficult place is to be passed, the father will have to lift the boy over it, or help him through it–the child, meanwhile, is merry as a bird–why should he not be? Thus should the Believer walk with God, resting on eternal tenderness and rejoicing in undoubted love! A Believer should be unconscious of dread either as to the present or to the future.

Beloved Friends in Christ, your Father may be trusted, He will supply all your needs–

"You are as much His care as if beside

No man or angel lived in Heaven or earth."

What an instructive walk a child has with a wise, communicative parent! How many of his little puzzles are explained to him, how everything about him is illuminated by the father's wisdom! Every step the boy takes, he becomes the wiser for such companionship. Oh, happy are the children of God who have been taught of their Father while they have walked with Him! Enoch must have been a man of profound knowledge and great wisdom as to Divine things. He must have dived into the deep things of God beyond most men. His life must, also, have been a holy life, because he walked with God, for God never walks out of the way of holiness. If we walk with God, we must walk according to truth, justice and love. The Lord has no company with the unjust and rebellious and, therefore, we know that he who walked with God must have been an upright and holy man.

Enoch's life must, moreover, have been a happy one. Who could be unhappy with such a Companion! With God Himself to be with us, the way can never be dreary. "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for You are with me." Granted that God is your Companion and your road must be a way of pleasantness and a path of peace. Did Enoch walk with God? Then his pilgrimage must have been safe. What a guard is the Great Jehovah! He is sun and shield! He gives Grace and Glory. He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under

the shadow of the Almighty. Nothing can harm the man who is walking with the Lord God at his right hand.

And oh, what an honor it is to walk with the Eternal! Many a man would give thousands to walk with a king. Numbers of people are such worshippers of dignities that if a king did but smile at then they would be intoxicated with delight! What, then, is the honor of walking with the King of kings? What a patent of nobility it is to be permitted to walk with the blessed and only Potentate all one's life long? Who is he that is thus favored to be the King's companion, to walk alone with Him and to become His familiar Friend? Jehovah rules earth and Heaven, and Hell. He is Lord of all who shall walk with Him!

If it were only for the honor of it, oh Christians, how you ought to desire to walk with God! Enoch found it safe, happy, holy, honorable and I know not how much more that is excellent! But certainly this was a golden life–where shall we find anything to equal it?

II. Secondly, let us consider WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES WERE CONNECTED WITH ENOCH'S WALKING WITH GOD. The first remark is that the details of his life are very few. We do not know much about Enoch and this is to his advantage. Happy is the nation which has no history, for a nation which has a history has been vexed with wars, revolutions and bloodshed. But a nation that is always happy, peaceful and prosperous has no chronicle to attract

the lover of sensations. Happy is Enoch that we cannot write a long biography of him! The few words, “Enoch walked with God,” suffice to depict his whole career, until, “he was not, for God took him.”

If you go and look at a farmer’s field and you say of it when you come back, “I saw yellow flowers covering it till it seemed as a cloth of gold. And then I spied out, here and there, white flowers like silver buttons set on the golden vesture. I also saw blue corn-flowers looking up with their lovely eyes, causing the whole field to sparkle,” you would think that it is a very pretty field if you are a child. But the farmer shakes his head, for he knows that it is in bad condition and overrun with weeds! But if you come back and simply say, “It is as fine a wheat field as ever grew and that is all,” then your description, though brief, is very satisfactory.

Many of those dazzling events and striking incidents and sensational adventures which go to make up an interesting biography may attract attention, but they do not minister to the real excellence of the life. No life can surpass that of a man who quietly continues to serve God in the place where Providence has placed him. I believe that in the judgment of angels and all pure-minded beings, that a woman’s life is most to be admired which consists simply of this–“She loved the Lord and did all she could for Him.” And that man’s life shall be the most noteworthy of whom it can be said, “He followed the Lord fully.” Enoch’s life has no adventures.

But is it not adventure, enough, for a man to walk with God? What ambition can crave a nobler existence than abiding in fellowship with the Eternal?

But some will say, “Well, but Enoch must have been very peculiarly situated. He was, no doubt, placed in very advantageous circumstances for piety.” Now, observe that this was not so, for first, he was a public man. He is called the “seventh from Adam.” He was a notable man and looked up to as one of the fathers of his age. A Patriarch in those days must have been a marked man, loaded with responsibility as well as with honor. The ancient custom was that the head of the family was prophet, priest and king in his household. And abroad, if he was a man of station and substance, he was counselor, magistrate and ruler. Enoch was a great man in his day, one of the most important of the period. Therefore we may be sure he had his trials and bore the brunt of opposition from the powerful ungodly party which opposed the ways of godliness.

He is mentioned among a noble list of men. Some have unwisely thought, “I could walk with God if I had a little cottage, if I lived in a quiet village, but you see I am a public man, I occupy a position of trust and I have to mix with my fellow men. I do not see how I am to walk with God.” Ah, my dear Friend, Enoch did! Though he was, undoubtedly, a man distinguished in his time and full of public cares, yet he lost not the thread of sacred converse with Heaven,

but held on in his holy course through a life of centuries. Note again that Enoch was a family man. “Enoch walked with God and begat sons and daughters.”

Some have said, “Ah, you cannot live as you like if you have a lot of children about you. Do not tell me about keeping up your hours of prayer and quiet reading of the Scriptures if you have a large family of little ones. You will be disturbed and there will be many domestic incidents which will be sure to try your temper and upset your equanimity. Get away into the woods and find a hermit’s cell–there, with your brown jug of water and your loaf of bread, you may be able to walk with God–but with a wife, not always amiable, and a troop of children who are never quiet, neither by day nor night, how can a man be expected to walk with God?” The wife, on the other hand, exclaims, “I believe that had I remained a single woman I might have walked with God. When I was a young woman I was full of devotion. But now with my husband, who is not always in the best of tempers, and with my children who seem to have an unlimited number of needs and never to have them satisfied, how is it possible that I can walk with God?”

We turn to Enoch, again, and we are confident that it can be done! “Enoch walked with God, after he begat Methuselah, 300 years, and begat sons and daughters, and all the days of Enoch were 365years.” Thus, you see, he was a public man and he was a family man–and yet he walked with God for more than 300 years. There is

no need to be a hermit, or to renounce married life in order to live near to God. In addition to this, Enoch lived in a very evil age. He was prominent at a time when sin was beginning to cover the earth. It was not very long before the earth was corrupt and God saw fit to sweep the whole population from off its surface on account of sin.

Enoch lived in a day of mockers and despisers. You know that from his prophecy, as recorded by Jude. He prophesied, saying, "The Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." He lived when few loved God and when those who professed to do so were being drawn aside by the blandishments of the daughters of men. Church and State were proposing an alliance, fashion and pleasure ruled the hour and unhallowed compromise was the order of the day. He lived towards the close of those primitive times wherein long lives had produced great sinners–and great sinners had invented great provocations of God. Do not complain, therefore, of your times and of your neighbors and other surroundings, for amid them all you may still walk with God.

Enoch walked with God and, in consequence thereof, he bore his witness for God. "Enoch, the seventh from Adam prophesied." He could not be silent! The fire burned within his soul and could not

be restrained. When he had delivered his testimony, it is clear that he encountered opposition. I am certain that he did so from the context in Jude, because the passage in Jude has to do with murmurers and "complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaks great swelling words," and Enoch is brought in as having had to do with such persons. His sermon shows that he was a man who stood firm amidst a torrent of blasphemy and rebuke, carrying on the great controversy for the Truth of God against the wicked lives and licentious tongues of the scoffers of his age. He says, "Behold, the Lord comes with myriads of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed."

It is clear that they spoke against Enoch, they rejected his testimony, they grieved his spirit and he mourned that in this they were speaking against God. For he speaks "of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." He saw their ungodly lives and bore witness against them. It is remarkable that his great subject should have been the Second Advent! And it is still more noteworthy that the two other men whom one would select as living nearest to God, namely, Daniel and John, were both men who spoke much concerning the coming of the Lord and the Great Judgment Day. I need not quote the words of Daniel, who tells us of the judgment which is to be set, and of the Ancient of

Days who shall come upon His Throne. Nor need I repeat the constant witness of John concerning the Lord's Second Coming. I will only mention his fervent exclamation, "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!"

Thus you see that Enoch was a preacher of the Word of God and, therefore, he had a care over and above that which falls to the lot of most of you. And yet, with that and all the rest put together, he could please God until his life's end! If I may speak of an end to a life which ran into an endless state of joy–he continued as long as he was here to walk in faith, to walk in a manner in which God was pleased–and so his communion with the Lord was never broken.

III. This brings us to conclude with the third head–WHAT WAS THE CLOSE OF ENOCH'S WALK? We would first remark that he finished his work early. Enoch walked with God and that was such a good, sure, progressive walk that he traveled faster and reached Home sooner than those of us who walk with God, sometimes, and with the world at other times! Three hundred and sixty-five years would have been a long life to us, but it was a short life for that period when several Patriarchs attained to nearly a thousand years of age.

Enoch's life, as compared to the usual life of the period, was like a life of 30 or 35 years in these short-lived ages–in fact, the best parallel to it is the life of our Lord. As with the extended ages of men of his period, Enoch's life was of about the same length as that

of the Lord Jesus in comparison with such lives as ours. He passed away comparatively a young man, as our dear Brother and Elder Verdon, just departed, has done, and we do not wonder that he did. They say, "Whom the gods love die young," and both Enoch and Verdon were men greatly beloved. Perhaps these holy men ended their career so soon because they had done their lifework so diligently that they finished early.

Some workmen, if they have a job to do in your house, are about it all day long, or rather all week long and make no end of confusion! No wonder that some people live a long while, for they need to do so much to do anything at all! But this man did his work so well and kept so close to God that his day's work was done at noon and the Lord said, "Come home, Enoch! There is no need for you to be out of Heaven any longer. You have borne your testimony, you have lived your life. Through all the ages men will look upon you as a model man and, therefore, you may come Home." God never keeps His wheat out in the fields longer than is necessary! When it is ripe, He reaps it at once! When His people are ready to go Home, He will take them Home. Do not regret the death of a good man while he is young. On the contrary, bless God that there is still some early ripening wheat in the world and that some of His saints are sanctified so speedily!

But what did happen to Enoch? I am afraid I have said he died, or that I shall say so, it is so natural to speak of men as dying, but he,

alone, and one other of all the human race are all that have entered the heavenly Canaan without fording the river of death! We are told concerning him that, "he was not." Those gentlemen who believe that the word, "to die," signifies to be annihilated, would have been still more confirmed in their views if the words in my text, "he was not," had been applied to all departed men, for if any expression might signify annihilation in their mode of translation–this is the one! "He was not" does not, however, mean that he was annihilated! And neither does the far feebler term of dying signify anything of the kind!

"He was not," that is to say, he was not here–that is all. He was gone from earth, but he was there–there where God had translated him. He was, he is with God! And that without having tasted death! Do not grudge him his avoidance of death. It was a favor, but not by any means so great as some would think, for those who do not die must undergo a change and Enoch was changed. "We shall not all sleep," says the Apostle, "but we shall all be changed." The flesh and blood of Enoch could not inherit the kingdom of God–in a moment he underwent a transformation which you and I will have to undergo in the day of the Resurrection. And so, though he was not on earth, he was translated or transplanted from the gardens of earth to Paradise above.

Now, if there is any man in the world that shall never die, it is he who walks with God. If there is any man to whom death will be as

nothing, it is the man who has looked to the Second Advent of Christ and gloried in it. If there is any man who, though he passes through the iron gates of death, shall never feel the terror of the grim foe, it is the man whose life below has been perpetual communion with God! Go not about by any other way to escape the pangs of death but walk with God, and you will be able to say, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" It is said of Enoch that, "God took him." A very remarkable expression! Perhaps He did it in some visible manner. I should not wonder. Perhaps the whole of the Patriarchs saw him depart, even as the Apostles were present when our Lord was taken up.

However that may be, there was some special rapture, some distinct taking up of this choice one to the Throne of the Most High. "He was not, for God took him." Note that he was missed. This is one thing which I could not overlook. He was missed, for the Apostle says he, "was not found." Now, if a man is not found, it shows that somebody looked for him. When Elijah went to Heaven, you remember, 50 men of the sons of the Prophets went and searched for him. I do not wonder that they did–they would not meet with an Elijah every day–and when he was gone away, body and all, they might well look for him! Enoch was not found, but they looked for him.

A good man is missed. A true child of God in a Church like this, working and serving his Master, is only one among five thousand–

but if he has walked with God, his decease is lamented. The dear Brother whom we have just buried, we shall miss. His brother Elders will miss him. The many who have been converted to God and helped by his means will miss him. And assuredly I shall miss him. I look towards the spot where he used to sit–I trust that someone else will sit there who will be half as useful as he was. It will be almost more than I can expect. We do not want to live and die so that nobody will care whether we were on earth or not. Enoch was missed when he was gone and so will they be who walk with God.

Last of all, Enoch's departure was a testimony. What did the Blessed Spirit say by the fact that, "he was not, for God took him," but this–there is a future state. Men had begun to doubt it, but when they said, "Where is Enoch?" and those who had witnessed his departure said, "God took him," it was, to them, an evidence that there was a God and that there was another world. And when they asked, "But where is his body?" there was another lesson. Two men had died before him, I mean two whose deaths are recorded in Scripture–Abel was killed and his witness was that the seed of the serpent hates the woman's seed. Adam, too, had died about 50 years before Enoch's translation, whose witness was that, however late the penalty may come, yet the soul that sins, it shall die.

Now comes Enoch and his testimony is that the body is capable of immortality! He could not bear testimony to resurrection, for he

did not die–for that we have testimony in Christ who is the first fruits from among the dead. But the testimony of Enoch went a good way towards it, for it bore evidence that the body was capable of being immortal and of living in a heavenly condition. “He was not, for God took him.” His departure also was a testimony to mankind that there is a reward for the righteous, that God does not sit with stony eyes, regardless of the sins of the wicked, or of the virtues of His saints. It proved that He sees and is pleased with His people who walk with Him–and that He can give them, even now, present rewards by delivering them from the pangs of death–and therefore He will certainly give rewards to all His people in some way or other.

Thus you see, living and dying–no, not dying, again I am mistaken–living and being translated–Enoch was still a witness to his generation! And I pray that all of us, whether we live or whether we sleep, may be witnesses for God. Oh that we could live as my good Brother, Verdon, whom we have lately buried, lived, whose soul was on fire with love to Christ! He had a very passion for souls! I scarcely think there is one among us who did as much as he, for though he had to earn his daily bread, his evenings were spent with us in the service of the Lord, or in preaching the Gospel! And then, all night long he frequently paced the weary streets, looking after the fallen, that he might bring them in! He often went

to his morning's work weary, except by the rest which he found in the service of Christ.

He would sometimes meet a Brother with eyes full of joy, and say, "Five souls won for Christ last night!" At other times, after a sermon, here he was a great soul hunter and would fetch enquirers downstairs into the Prayer Meeting. And when he had squeezed my hand he would say in his Swiss tones, which I cannot imitate, "Jesus saved some more last night! More souls were brought to Jesus." For him to live was to win souls! He was the youngest in our eldership, but the gray-heads do him honor. As we stood weeping about his tomb, there was not one among us but what felt that we had lost a true Brother and a valiant fellow soldier. My the Lord raise up others among you to do what Elder Verdon did!

May the Lord quicken the older Brothers and Sisters to be more active than they are and make the young ones more devoted. Our ranks are broken, who shall fill up the gap? We are getting fewer and fewer as the Lord takes one and another Home of the best-instructed and of the bravest-hearted. But, by His Grace, recruits are daily coming in! May others come forward–yes, Lord, bring them forward by Your Holy Spirit to be leaders in the front ranks, that as the vanguard melts into the Church Triumphant, the rear may continually find additions! Translated to the skies are some, may others be translated out of darkness into marvelous light, for Christ's sake. Amen. PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE

SERMON–Psalm 119:33-56.HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”–122, 780, 775.

Ge 7:1 • Noah's Eminence

SERMON 3196

N*oah's Eminence*

"And the LORD said unto Noah, Come you and all your house into the ark, for you have I seen righteous before Me in this generation."

Genesis 7:1

GOD keeps His eyes upon the sons of men and He searches among them for certain individuals upon whom He delights to fix His gaze. These are not the kings and princes. These are not the men of talent or of fashion. These are not the men who are regarded by their fellows as famous. When God speaks of having seen Noah, He speaks of having seen one of the kind of men for whom He was looking, namely, a righteous man. There is not a righteous man

upon the earth whom God does not see. He may be in a very obscure position, his circumstances may be those of poverty, he may be anything but famous. But as long as he is righteous, God delights to look upon him. He looks upon him so as to take care of him so that if destruction is to come upon the face of the earth, an ark is to be prepared for the preservation of righteous Noah and his family. “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.” Whoever else He does not see, He is sure to see the righteous! But “the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.”

Now, what God delights to look upon, we should delight to look upon, so we will fix our mind’s eye upon the righteous man mentioned in our text and notice, first, the eminence of Noah’s character. whereinthat eminence consisted. .

So, first, we are to notice THE EMINENCE OF NOAH’S CHARACTER. He was a righteous man in the sight of the Lord. The Lord said unto Noah…“you have I seen righteous before Me in this generation.”

Noah was a gracious man, one to whom the Lord had shown great favor for He had put Divine Grace in his heart and had given him faith, for it was by faith that Noah “prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” The Grace of God was within him and became the source and wellspring from which flowed the

righteousness for which he was so remarkable. Divine Grace is the root of every righteous character, so let Grace have the honor and glory of it!

In the Chapter preceding our text, we are told that " Noah was a just man." It is especially noticeable that in an ageof violence and oppression, Noah was a just man. He was no oppressor. He dealt justly and fairly with his fellow men. Noah was also "perfect in his generations." The marginal reading is that he was "upright." He was not one who leaned this way for advantage, or who leaned that way for gain. He stood upright in conscious integrity before his fellows. Acting in accordance with the Grace of God which was in his heart, he had learned to do that which was just towards others. He was also a devout man, for we read that "Noah walked with God." Like his ancestor, Enoch, he lived in communion with God, in prayerfulness and pious meditation–and his life before his fellow men was in consistency with that walk before God.

It is especially mentioned that

Noah was righteous in that generation, and this is the more remarkable as that gener

ation was so unrighteous and ungodly! The darker the night, the more brightly shine the stars–and good men are never more precious than in evil times! There are plenty to go the way the stream is running. When godliness is in the ascendant, and the Puritans rule the realm, they are Puritans, too, but when

ungodliness comes to the front and the Cavalier holds the scepter, they scoff at everything that is good! Like dead fish, they must go with the stream–they have not the power of the living fish to swim against the current. They go the way their neighbors go. But Noah was a righteous man in an unrighteous generation. It may be that you, dear Friend, are seeking to serve the Lord among most ungodly men. Well, if it is so, be all the firmer for the right because of all the wrong that is around you! Remember how much honor it brings to the Grace of God when it produces a righteous Noah in the midst of an evil generation. You, working man, are the only one on your street who comes to the House of God–well, mind that you come boldly–be not ashamed of being different! And when, in your workshop, you hear the cursing and reviling of the wicked, let them know whose colors you wear and who is your King. But be careful that your life is so consistent that they cannot pick holes in it–and then you need not mind being a speckled bird among them, as Noah was in his generation!

What makes the character of Noah all the more remarkable is the fact that he was almost alone as a righteous man.The Lord said to him, “You have I seen righteous before Me in this generation,” as though he was the only righteous one in that generation! When the flood came, his ancestors had all passed away and the members of his own family were not all that they ought to have been. He practically had to stand alone and standing alone is not easy work.

You know how we are all helped by the company of godly people, how good it is for us to be where the Word is preached with power, or where we can listen to the gracious talk of Christians who are more advanced in Divine things than we are. But to stand quite alone–to be the one white man amid a nation of aborigines, to be the one traveler in a land which all the inhabitants are your foes, to be in a community where there is no one to help you–it is only the Grace of God that can make a man of this sort and enable him to say, "If the world, itself, is to be destroyed, one honest man shall be found upon its surface. The Grace of God has so settled me in the fear of the Most High that whatever others may do, as for me and my house we will serve the Lord."

But the special point about Noah's character is that we are not only told that he was righteous, but that he was righteous before God. The Lord said to him, "You have I seen righteous before Me in this generation." As I have turned that expression over in my mind, I have thought of the various tribunals before which we all have to stand. And as I try to take you, in imagination, before them, one after another, I wonder how many of you will be able to pass them all and to endure the supreme test so that, like Noah, you may be righteous before God?

First of all, there is the common tribunal of ordinary society and public repute. I hope that without any conceit, the most of us can say that we believe we are reckoned as righteous by our fellow

men. They trust us in business matters, they do not suspect us of dishonesty. We hope we have not given them occasion to do so. Yet, in so large an assembly as this, there may be some who dare not say that even in the opinion of their fellow men, they are righteous. And if it is so, my dear Hearers–if you are justly condemned by your fellow creatures–how can you expect to stand before the tribunal of God? If you cannot dispute the justice of man's verdict, you may well tremble at the thought of appearing before the bar of God! You are evidently unrighteous but oh, thank God that there is a Savior for the unrighteous, "for when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." That last word describes you–you know that you could not stand without a degree of shame before those who are acquainted with your character. Well then, fall down upon your knees before God–tell Him that you are sinners, but also quote Paul's faithful saying that, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Do not be afraid to do so! Christ did not come to save sham sinners, but real sinners such as you are! Go to God in all your sinfulness, without first attempting to make yourselves better, and cast yourselves upon His Infinite Mercy in Christ Jesus!

There is another tribunal a little further on. A man may have a pretty good character among his fellow men who do not know him intimately, but how does he stand in the opinion of his more immediate friends? Those who know us well, those with whom we

constantly trade, those whom we meet in our daily work–our employers, our servants, our fellow workers–what do they think of us? If any of them think badly of you because you try to do what you believe to be right, you need not mind that, but rather rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake! But, on the other hand, if friends who judge you as favorably as they can are obliged to regard you as far from upright, how will you stand before the all-seeing eyes of God? Let the painful fact that you do not stand well before those who know you drive you to humble yourself before the Lord and to seek pardon and peace through Jesus Christ, the sinner's Savior!

Suppose we have been able to pass these two barriers of public repute and our more immediate acquaintance? How do we stand in the inner circle at home? Occasionally, when I have spoken well of some young man or woman, I have been grieved to hear the parent stay, "I wish, Sir, your judgment had been correct. My son (or daughter) may behave very well before strangers, but it is very different at home." Sometimes I have thought a good deal of certain men whom I have met here but I have afterwards discovered that they had broken-hearted wives whom they had not treated with the love and kindness they ought to have shown towards them. And I have also known professing Christian women who have not sturacter in the Church, and a reputation for sanctity there, what is the verdict of those who know more about our private

life? What is the verdict of the servant concerning his master? What is the judgment of the wife concerning her husband? What does the parent or the brother or sister say? I solemnly fear that there are many professors of religion who cannot pass this test–and I am deeply sorry when this is the case–for if there is any place where Christianity should be best seen, it is in the home circle! Rowland Hill used to say that he would not give a penny for the religion of the man whose cat and dog were not the better for it. And there is much good sense in that homely remark. I do not know anyone here whom this cap will fit, but if there is such a person, I hope he will put it on and wear it. This is the sum and substance of the matter–if our character cannot endure the scrutiny of those who are around us in our home, how can we hope to stand at the bar of God when all that we have done shall be published before the assembled universe?

Supposing that we can satisfactorily pass that ordeal, how do we stand before our enemies? “Before our enemies?” asks someone. Yes, for you remember what was said by the jealous presidents and princes of Babylon concerning Daniel, “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the Law of his God.” He was such a godly man that they could not find a flaw in his character however closely they examined him. There he stood fully clad in the armor of righteousness and before they could lay hold of him, they had to

get their king to make a new law ordaining that any man who would pray should be cast into the den of lions. Look, too, at our Lord Jesus Christ when He was accused by His enemies–they brought various charges against Him, but they could not substantiate them. And even when they bribed two witnesses to give evidence against Him, even they did not agree with one another as towhat He had said! His life had been so perfect that there was nothing that could be truthfully laid to His charge. “Ah,” says one, “that is a test, to live so that even our enemies cannot truthfully find any fault in us.” It is no dishonor to a manto be wrongfully accused–it is rather a mark of honor to have bad men plotting against him–but it is a subject for gratitude to God when one can run the gauntlet of our enemies and remain unabashed before their cruel, wolfish eyes! They are always on the watch for anything wrong or inconsistent with a Christian profession. “Well,” says one, “that is a test that I could not pass.” If so, dear Friend, remember this–there is no enemy whose eyes are as clear and as keen as those of God! Even the great archenemy could not detect a thousandth part of the imperfections and infirmities that lie open before the Most High! How important it must be, then, to be found righteous before God!

Then, further, I wonder whether all of us who profess to be Christians could pass the test of being adjudged righteous before our own conscience. I do not mean that we should be self-

righteous–God forbid that we should ever be that! But I mean that we should have so lived that our own conscience would declare that we had not been hypocrites, nor liars, nor deceivers, but that, through the Lord's upholding and restraining Grace, we had been true to our profession and had done that which we sincerely believed to be right. You remember how the Apostle John, taught of the Spirit, writes concerning this matter–"If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God." [See Sermons #1855, Volume 31–WHAT IS THE VERDICT? and #3152, Volume 55–THE LOWER COURTS–Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Can we, all of us, pass thistest? Happy and blessed are we if we can! But even then, we must remind ourselves and one another that there is a still sterner test which Noah was able to pass, for he was righteous before the Lord.

II. This brings us to the second part of our subject, in which we are to try to find out WHEREIN THE EMINENCE OF NOAH'S CHARACTER CONSISTED. He was distinguished for his righteousness before God, for the Lord expressly said to him, "You have I seen righteous before Me in this generation."

So the eminence of Noah's character consisted in this–his righteousness must have answered to the Divine standard.God would not have called Noah righteous if he had not been righteous–

and we cannot suppose that God's standard is anything short of perfection. Then did Noah live a perfect life? No, speaking popularly, and as the Scripture often speaks, we may say that Noah's character was a righteous one. There must have been flaws in it and, certainly, after this time, there was one great sad flaw of which it is not now necessary to speak more particularly–still, God regarded him as righteous–and that must settle the question as far as we are concerned.

Noah had the righteousness which is of faith, and that faith of his enabled him to look forward to Christ's Atonement. Do you ask how I know this? Well, when he came out of the ark, he "built an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast, and of every clear fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar." Those sacrifices were acceptable unto the Lord, for He "smelled a sweet savor"–"a savor of rest"–in them, and they were among the many types of the one great Sacrifice that was afterwards to be offered upon Calvary's Cross. It was in this way that Noah's faith enabled him to look forward to Christ as the sin-atoning Lamb of God. And his faith, like that of Abraham, "was counted unto him for righteousness." God looked upon him, in Christ, as a perfectly righteous man–and his righteous life was the experiment and outflow of the inward righteousness which God had imputed to him in answer to his faith. He was righteous before God, and no man was ever that in his own naked character! Job's friend, Bildad, said

concerning God, “The stars are not pure in His sight. How much less man, that is a worm? And the son of man, which is a worm?”

I have set forth the character of Noah before you and commended it to the utmost. Yet I know that in the sight of God, the Patriarch’s character was not, in itself, perfect. There must have been innumerable imperfections, infirmities, and faults which God’s Omniscient eyes could see in it. How, then, could he be said to be righteous before God? Why, God looked at him in Christ! He became heir of the righteousness which is by faith, or, as Paul puts it, he was “accepted in the Beloved.” Then, in consequence of that acceptance, he was “righteous” in the modified sense in which all the Lord’s people are righteous when the Grace of God has taught them to walk uprightly and so made them, at least in a measure, like their righteous Father who is in Heaven!

But let me add to this, in order to clear the Gospel of anything like legal defilement, that the eminence of Noah’s character appears in the fact that

he was righteous before God, that is to say, his righteousness had respect to God. When

he dealt with his neighbors, he did not say to himself, “Now I must deal righteously with these men, or I shall lose my reputation as an honest, upright man.” Oh, no! He dealt righteously with men because he desired to be righteous before God. He did not ask himself, “What will my neighbors think or say concerning the

building of the ark?" His great concern was to be obedient to the commands that the Lord had given him and, therefore, we read again and again, "according to all that God commanded him, so did he." He fashioned his life by the will of God, not by the will of his fellow men, nor by his own will and, Beloved, this is the way for us to be righteous before God, when He brings us, by His Grace, to desire to live according to His will and to His praise and glory! I fear that many professors go blundering on, not stopping to pray, "Lord, show us what You will have us do." Noah did not act thus– he was righteous before God, righteous with respect to God, righteous in God's sight!

I would like to have, in this Tabernacle, a band of men and women who will be just and fear not. Who will do the right even though all others are opposed to them, or though no one else shall know anything about it. Are any of you seeking to please men by your religion? If so, such religion is of little or no worth. Be not the servants of men, but the servants of God! Take your orders from Him and from Him alone. Do not shape your course and character according to the fashion of society. If you are truly born of God, you belong to a noble race which should never stoop to such degradation as that, so be righteous before the Lord! You have already had the righteousness of Christ imputed to you, so may the Spirit of God impart that righteousness to you that you may live unto God, and before God, fearless and careless of what men may

say against you so long as you are right in the sight of the Most High! May the Lord graciously give us such a righteousness as this! And, Beloved, we must have it, we must have it, for without holiness shall no man see the Lord! Our own righteousness can never save us–we must have the righteousness of Christ!

But remember that we must be purified in heart, character and conduct, or else, where God is we cannot go. How searching will be that test which we shall have to endure at the last! When we are judged by our fellow man, they may be deceived–but when we shall be judged by God, He will never be deceived. Men may accept fair words as signs and tokens of Divine Grace, but God will not so much regard our words as read our hearts! If men hear us pray, they say, "What good men they must be." Yet God knows what hypocrisy may be lurking behind those pretty sentences! Men judge us by our actions, but God can read the motives that prompted us to those actions. You know how righteous men have appeared to be in the eyes of their fellow men, yet they have proved to be false after all. God grant that none of us may ever be like that, but may we have a character that will bear holding up to the Light of God, a character concerning which, when the eyes of God examine it, He will say, "Here is truth in the inward parts. My Spirit has worked truth and integrity within this heart and life–this man is weighed in the balances, and is not found wanting." I am speaking these solemn words to myself, to the deacons and elders

around me, and to you who have long professed to be Christians– not to you outsiders, but to the very best people here. None of us are any better than we ought to be and I cannot help fearing that some of us are not what we seem to be. Do not let us imagine that what we seem to be in the sight of our fellow creatures will have any weight in the judgment of God! We may be reckoned righteous by our neighbors and friends, but if we are not washed in the precious blood of Jesus, if we are not robed in the righteousness of Christ, if our lives have not within them the evidences of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, our friends' favorable judgment will avail us nothing when the all-seeing eyes of God beholds us as we really are! I pray with all my heart that we may, each one of us, be righteous before God even as Noah was in his generation.

III. I have no time left for dealing with the third part of my subject which was to have been THE GRACIOUS REWARD GIVEN TO NOAH BECAUSE OF THE EMINENCE OF HIS CHARACTER.

You all know that the Lord will bless the righteous forever and ever, but the great question that we all have to answer is, are we righteous? Oh, what searching sermons, what tremendous blows hypocrites will endure without showing asign of feeling anything! I usually notice that if I preach a sermon that is more than ordinarily searching, there are sure to be some tender-hearted souls crying out at the close that they are hypocrites. Dear Creatures, I wish I had no

hearers more hypocritical than they are! Those who take such discourses most to heart are often those who have the least reason for doing so, while the real hypocrite is no more moved by it than is the marble in our baptistery! I might almost point him out with my finger, for he would not stir–he would be as bold and brazen as Judas was when he sat with the rest of the Apostles just before going out to betray his Lord. Oh, the dreadful presumption, the terrible hardness of heart to which men may come! Lest this should be the case with any of us, let us, each one, now pray David's prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Let each one also pray, "Lord, let me know the truth about my case! Let me neither be self-deceived nor a deceiver of others! Let me know the worst of my case! Open my eyes even though the sight of my petition before you should be horrible to the last degree! Do not let me go down to Hell dreaming that I am going to Heaven! Let me know what I really am–and if my heart has never been broken, break it now! If I have never been washed in the precious blood of Jesus, wash me in it now! Jesus, the sinner's Savior, I come to You this moment. I cast my arms around Your Cross, O frown me not away! Look in mercy and love upon me and tell me that my sins, which are many, are all forgiven."

Let the most trembling soul in this whole congregation cling to the Cross, crying to Him who hung upon it–

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling.
Naked, come to You for dress.
Helpless, look to You for Grace.
Foul, I to the Fountain fly–
Wash me, Savior, or I die!"

If we cannot cling to Christ's Cross as the sailor clings to the mast, let us cling as the limpet clings to the rock–and the more the devil tries to detach us from it, the more closely let us cling to it. Let us come either as saints or sinners, whichever we may be, to the foot of the Cross and look up at that dear head crowned with thorns and those blessed hands and feet and side so rudely pierced and, as by faith, we see the precious sin-atoning blood flowing from the Savior's cruel wounds, let us each one sing as we have often done before–

"There is a Fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains!
The dying thief rejoiced to see
That Fountain in his day,
Oh may I there, though vile as he,

Wash all my sins away!”

Then, though you have not, up to now, been righteous before God as Noah was, you shall be so for the future! The blood of Christ and the righteousness of Christ shall make you so! And then a new heart and a right spirit shall be given to you–God’s own Spirit shall be put within you and God shall be glorified in you even as He was in righteous Noah! May it be so, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

Ge 7:1 • A Family Sermon

SERMON 1336

A *Family Sermon*

"And the Lord said unto Noah, Come you and all your house into the ark…And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood."

Genesis 7:1, 7

GOD in infinite Grace had entered into Covenant with Noah that He would preserve him and his family alive. The tenor of that Covenant you will find in the 18 th chapter. "With you will I establish My Covenant; and youshall come into the ark, you, and your sons, and your wife, and your sons' wives with you." There was a positive foretelling of Noah's coming into the ark and finding

safety. The thing was fixed and ordained so to be, and yet, when the time came, Noah was not carried into the ark by force, nor lifted into it against his will by a benevolent violence. He was bid to come into the ark in the most natural manner possible and he entered it voluntarily and cheerfully. He and his family left their houses to find a home in the ark, and so they were saved.

The Covenant promise and purpose were fulfilled, but Noah acted in perfect freedom, as much choosing to go into the ark as others chose to keep out. Now, Beloved, there is a decree in Heaven ordaining the salvation of the Lord's chosen people. It is useless to deny that decree, for even if it were not so, yet no difficulty would be withdrawn, it would only be shifted to another place. Some of us, instead of denying predestination, like to think upon it and find rivers of consolation springing from the everlasting purpose of the living God.

But, albeit that God has purposed and decreed the salvation of His elect, yet this by no means prevents our speaking, in the Lord's name, to all men. Nor does it set aside the necessity that those men should cheerfully accept the Gospel of God and awaken themselves to obey its command, by the power of Grace. My Hearer, I cannot tell whether your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the foundation of the world, but I can assure you that to you is the word of this salvation sent and that it bids you believe in the

Lord Jesus Christ with this assurance–that if you do so you shall be saved, for so has the Lord most solemnly declared!

The method of the Divine arrangement involves an active consent on our part and a willing obedience to the Gospel command. The purpose is sure, but it is unknown and unrevealed till the Gospel is made known and brought home with effectual power so that the heart accepts it, the spirit obeys it and the man is saved–saved as a free agent. He is saved as a voluntary being, yet not saved apart from the secret, almighty purpose of the Most High–nor without the effectual working of His Grace. And so we come here, at this time, believing that there are some in this house concerning whom the Lord has purposed that they shall be Christ's in the day of His appearing.

We address you all hoping that the Spirit of God will apply the Word with special power to the chosen, that they may see that they, themselves, must believe in Jesus–that they must be actively awakened to repentance, to prayer, to a change of life, to confidence in Christ. When this shall happen, then shall the Covenant purpose be known to them and fulfilled in them, for they shall be saved from the wrath to come! Not knowing, therefore, who is to come into this net, we cast it into the sea, believing that Christ knows every fish in the sea and what fish will come to the net. We do not wish to know this, ourselves, for it is quite enough for us to know how to cast in the net and to be fishers of men.

The practical work belongs to us, but the result we leave with the Lord. There are two things in the two texts. The first is the call–"The Lord said unto Noah, Come you and all your house into the ark." The second is the obedience to the call–"And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark."

First, then, THE CALL. We remark, at the outset, that it was a call from the Lord. "The Lord said unto Noah." You see, Noah was familiar with other forms of calls, for he had been the instrument of many. For many years he was a preacher of righteousness, and the principal office of a preacher is to herald his Master, to make proclamations and to call upon men in the name of the Lord to obey the Lord's Word. "To you, O men, do I call, and My voice is to the sons of men."

But it was not by such calls as Noah could give that men were to be brought into the ark. For albeit we cannot doubt that he was a faithful minister and an earnest preacher. And, no doubt, he pleaded with the people day and night, yet, sad to say, not one beside his own family entered into the ark through Noah's labors. Perhaps his preaching may have been useful to his wife and to his sons' wives. If so, he had no mean reward for his pains. But to all outside of his family his word seems to have been powerless as to delivering them from death by the devouring flood. But now he was to know

something of another call, differing in many respects–a call from the Lord of Heaven and earth whose Word is with power.

The preacher can only give the general call and it is his duty to give it to all around him. He is to stand in the streets and lanes of the city and bid men come to the feast of Grace. Yes, he is to go into the highways and hedges and, as far as he can, to compel them to come in. But men do not come upon our compulsion or upon our call unless a secret something goes with our pleadings–a mysterious power, quiet, silent, omnipotent–making the voice of man to be the voice of the Holy Spirit and hiding within the shell of the outward call the kernel of the inner call! When the Lord said to Noah, "Come you," he did come.

He did not put it off and say that surely it was meant for others. He felt it to be a personal call. It was "Come you." He knew that it was for himself. God the Holy Spirit speaks home to the inmost soul when He speaks to save–there is no putting off His voice as though directed to another. Noah did not feel inclined to controvert, or plead for delay, or object, or make excuses, or say he could not. When the Lord said to Noah, "Come you," Noah came. The call was effectual, and resistance was out of the question!

It is true the Lord had, in a measure, spoken to the rest of mankind by Noah's ministry, but that form of the Lord's speaking in common pleadings and invitations can be resisted to men's destruction. They could close their ears against the common, or

general call, and they did, for it was true then, as it is now, “many are called, but few are chosen.” Myriads go to destruction with the honest call of God ringing in their ears which they willfully reject–

“The worldlings willfully went on
Rebellious till their day was past.
They forced the lingering deluge down
And perished in their sins at last.”

When that silent call comes, which we are accustomed to speak of as “effectual calling,” then, if there is resistance, it is sweetly overcome. The will finds itself no longer headstrong and obstinate. The judgment, darkened before, becomes light, and the soul, before motionless, cries, “Draw me, I will run after You.”

Happy are the men to whom such a call comes from God Himself! I ask you, my dear Hearers now present, whether you have ever had God dealing with you in this powerful, this inward, this spiritual manner? If not, I am sure you have never come to Christ. If you have received no call but such as I can give you, such as my Brothers who aid me can give you, such as the most earnest evangelist can give you, you have been called in vain and are yet in your sins. If you are, indeed, the people of God, you must know that a voice in your souls, mysteriously persuasive and overpowering, has spoken to you and said, “Come to Jesus,” and you have yielded to it.

Happy are you, tonight, if you have been so called, for it is written, “Whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” Now, note that this call from God was of such a tenor that Noah was bound, personally, to come. It was a call to personal action. Noah must come. “Come you.” It was not a call of this kind–“Now, Noah, sit where you are and you will be right. Wait, Noah. Patiently, quietly wait, and see what God will do.” But, no! It said to Noah, “Come you.” Noah must come and he must come to the ark, too. For him there was only one way of salvation–no more than for anybody else!

He must come to the ark which God had bid him prepare as the instrument of safety–and he must come into it. It was of no use his coming near it, but he must come into it. Within its wooden walls he must hide himself. Within its vast chambers he must find a dwelling. And so, dear Soul, when God calls you, He will make you feel that you must come to Jesus–not wait and delay, but come by a distinct act of the soul to be immediately performed! And you must come to Christ, too, for believing in anything else will destroy, rather than save you! Your faith must come and place her whole

You must come into Christ, too–so near to Him as to be in Him, to make Him your hiding place and your refuge from the storm. You must have an inward faith which takes you into the very inwards of Christ, hides you in His wounds, conceals you within

Himself. When God calls Noah it is, “Come into the ark.” And when God calls any sinner to Himself it is, “Come to Christ; be hidden in Christ that you may be preserved as the Lord’s choice treasure.” Come, make the Lord Jesus your refuge, your deliverance and your habitation!

Now, it would have been of no use for Noah to have gone on making preparations for his dwelling in the ark. That he had done long enough. He had gathered all sorts of food for all the creatures that were to be lodged in that marvelous menagerie and now that he is bid to enter the ark, he does not say, “I must gather more hay and store up more corn and fruits.” No, “Come you into the ark” finished all his labors. He must have done with preparing and actually enter the refuge. I know some of you have been thinking about your souls and praying, and reading good books, and attending meetings, and trying to get instruction.

Well, so far, so good. But that is not the way by which you will find salvation. The call of God to your soul is, “Come into the ark,” or, in other words, “Come now to Jesus and distinctly and finally commit yourself to Him. Just as Noah put himself in the ark, to sink in the ark or swim in the ark–to live in the ark or die in the ark. He committed his whole future to the ark and that is what you have to do–commit yourself and all that is about you entirely to the Lord Jesus Christ. Considerations, resolutions and preparations must come to an end and you must in very deed "come into the ark.”–

"O Jesus, Savior of the lost,
Our ark and hiding place,
By storms of sin and sorrow tossed
We seek Your sheltering Grace.
Forgive our wandering and our sin,
We wish no more to roam;
Open the ark and take us in,
Our soul's eternal home."

Neither would it have done for Noah to go round the ark to survey it again. No doubt he had examined, before, that ark of wood and been pleased to think its timbers were so sound. No insect could eat that bitter wood. It was a tree that would not rot. No doubt he was pleased with the architecture of the vessel, for he had built it with no surveyor there but his God and, it was, therefore, well built. God was the great Master of Noah's naval yard and had given him plans and specifications. It was quite right that Noah should inspect the huge vessel up and down and see to the caulking and make sure that it was well pitched inside and out, and so on.

But now he must give up surveying and come to inhabiting. He must come into the ark to remain in it. And so must I, like you, my dear Hearers, to take an interest in the Person of Christ and in the way of salvation! It is a very hopeful sign when you survey the Ark of salvation and say, "How stoutly built, and how thoroughly well

caulked it is. Never were timbers better put together, there is no fear of a leakage here! She will live out every storm that will ever beat upon her. She is a true lifeboat upon a stupendous scale."

I like to hear a sinner say, "Christ is a great Savior! I perceive that He is able to save to the uttermost and I wonder at the wisdom and the goodness of God that He has devised such a way of salvation." So far, so good, dear Friend, but all your admiration of Jesus will not save you! You must come inside His ark! By a simple faith you must, at once, give yourselves up to Jesus to be saved in Him. No longer look at Christ externally, nor survey Him even with a grateful eye for what He has done for others. But come, now, and commit yourself to Him. There stands the door and you have to go through it, and enter into the inner chambers, or you will find no safety.

Neither would it have been of any use for Noah to go up to the ark and stand against the door and say, "I do not say that I am not going in and I do not even say that I am not in already. I have got one foot in, but I am a moderate man and like to be friendly with both sides. I am in and yet not in. If the door was shut I do not know but that it would cut me in halves. But, anyway, I do not want to be altogether out and I do not want to be quite in. I should like to stand where I could hurry in as soon as I saw the water coming up, but, still, while there is another opportunity of taking a walk on the

dry land, I may as well avail myself of it. There is no hurry about it, is there?

"You see, if a man keeps his finger on the latch of the door, he can pop in as soon as ever he sees the first drop of rain descending, or the water coming up anywhere near him. But is there any reason for being so decided all at once? Everybody likes his liberty, you know, and does not want to be shut in before he needs to be, at any rate." No, that would not do for Noah. God said to Him, "Come into the ark," and he went in at once. Noah must not hesitate, or linger, or halt, but in he must go–right in.

And, O dear Souls, you that linger, you that are of two opinions. If you were wise and did but know the danger of being outside, and the bliss of being inside, instead of hesitating you would want to penetrate into the ark's inmost recesses and to take your place in the very center just as I desire to go right to the heart of Christ, into the very center of His inmost love, for there, only there, shall I be perfectly at rest! Do not hesitate! Decide! Decide at once! May the Spirit of God lead you to do so. I know you will not delay if the effectual call is now being given–you will be obedient to the heavenly vision at once.

Now, go a little further. It is God that calls and Noah must, in very deed, personally and actually come. It is said, "Come into the ark." Now, notice that word, for it teaches us that in entering the ark, Noah would be coming close to His God. "Come you"–Why

did it not say, “Go you?” Why, because God was inside and meant to be inside, in the ark, along with Noah and, therefore, He said, “Come you.” Oh that blessed, “come”! We had it the other night, you know, when we preached from, “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden.” “Come”–that is the Grace word! But, oh, it is the Glory word, too, for Christ will say at the last, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.”

“Come.” “God is in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” And he that comes to Christ comes to God! If you find rest in Christ you will only do what the great God has done before you, for He rests in Christ Jesus! He smells a sweet savor of rest in the Redeemer’s Sacrifice. If you delight in Christ you will only do what God has always been doing, for He delights in His Son–“This is my Beloved Son,” He said, “in whom I am well pleased.” There is no coming to the Father but by Christ–and he that comes to Christ has come to the Father–and he has seen and known the Father. Coming to Christ is coming to God!

Now observe that what is meant here is this–dwellers in Christ are dwellers with God. To live in the ark was to live with God. Dwellers in Christ are under the protection of God, for to dwell in the ark was to have God for a guardian. Noah did as much as say, when he passed into the ark, “God is here and I have come to live

with Him. God is Master and Protector, here, and I am come to be protected by Him." O Soul, when you can say, "I trust in Christ," then you may go on to say, "Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations." You may "joy in God through Jesus Christ, by whom, also, we have received the Atonement." Ah, how near to God that man is who dwells in Christ! When Christ is All in All to you, the Father Himself loves you and you may rejoice in a consciousness of communion and fellowship with Him.

Now, notice that when Noah came to the ark, he must come there to find his all in it. All the food he needs he must find in the ark. Mistress Noah cannot go out to market any more. Her daughters can no longer go to the shops and the stores. Noah's sons cannot farm or trade, or hunt or dig for gold. Houses, lands, treasures will soon lie deep at the bottom of the flood. All Noah has is in the ark. It is his sole possession, his all, for which he has suffered the loss of all things and rejoices to have done so. From the time of his entrance he is to find all his pleasure in the ark. There are no outdoor amusements for himself or his family.

He cannot even find pleasure in the scenery, for that is blotted out by the deluges of rain. The valleys have vanished and even the hills have disappeared as the deluge has increased. If he is to find any pleasure, he must find it inside the ark. It was a melancholy prospect, indeed, if he could look out the window–but his joy and delight lay within the chambers of the ark, for there was he saved–

and there he dwelt with God! All his food, also, to supply his necessities he must find inside the ark. He had no barn nor warehouse to look to, and there was no port at which he could touch to take in cargo. Whatever need might arise, it must be met by the stores within the ark, for there was nothing outside but death.

All his work was inside the ark, too. He had nothing to do, now, except within that vessel, no fields to plow, no shops to keep, nothing to do but what was inside the ark. Now, when a soul comes to Christ, it commits itself to Him for everything. Christ must feed it–you must eat no longer for your soul anything but the Bread of Heaven. Jesus must become meat and drink to you, for, "His flesh is meat, indeed, and His blood is drink, indeed." Now you are to find your pleasure in Him–your choicest delights, your sweetest joys–all in Christ Jesus who is our hope, our crown, our delight, our Heaven.

And now, from now on, your service must be to Him only. "You are not your own, you are bought with a price," and all that you have to do in this world now lies within the circumference of Christ's will. The most common duties of life are now to be brought within the sacred circle. You have nothing to do outside in the waters of sin and self and Satan. You need neither fish in the waters of sin, nor go boating upon the waves of worldliness–you are in danger if you do. You are inside the ark, shut in with God,

dead to the world and only alive in Christ Jesus, that you may be floated in Him out of the old world into "the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwells righteousness."

Thus, you see, Noah, in coming into the ark, left everything and found everything–even as by us the world is forsaken and Jesus becomes our All in All–

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave, and follow You.
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
You, from now on, my All shall be.
Let the world despise and leave me,
They have left my Savior, too:
But my Lord will not deceive me,
And in Him my all I view."

Again, Noah must come into the ark never to go out again. "Come you," says God, "into the ark." He is not to make a visit, but he is to be shut in. As far as that world was concerned, Noah was to be in the ark as long as it lasted. When the new world came, then he walked out in joyful liberty. But you and I, dear Brothers and Sisters, are in Christ, not to be there for a time, but to abide in Him forever and ever!

If any man thinks to get any good by a transient profession of Christ, that man is grossly mistaken! If you imagine that you can take up religion and put it down again–that you can be Believers

today and unbelievers tomorrow, you know nothing of the Grace of God, for the Grace of God begets a life and that life is incorruptible and lives forever–nothing can destroy it or remove it. He that is really in Christ is like Noah in the ark–he is shut in by God's own hand. "None shall pluck them out of My hand," says Christ, and, truly, none shall ever take a soul out of the grip of Jesus Christ who is once within it.

You come to Christ to be married to Him! You take Him to have Him and hold Him from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health–and death, itself, shall not part you. "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" Noah, according to the Lord's command, must come in at once. "And the Lord said unto Noah, Come you into the ark"–come at once, "for yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth 40 days and 40 nights. And every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth."

There was a door to the ark and that door was open. Indeed, we are not told that it had ever been shut since it had been made. There it stood, wide open. We never hear of anybody that ever went in and was driven out. We never hear of a single beast or bird, or even a creeping thing that there was but ever went in was cast out. So long as the door was open whoever came was welcome, but long-suffering was drawing to an end. The time was now come for Noah

to go in and the time was also near when the door must be shut. And so, when the Spirit of God comes to persuade men sweetly in effectual calling, it is always in the present tense.

The Lord never called any man by effectual Grace to believe in Christ next week. He calls them to believe in Christ directly, and one of the ways by which the effectual call may be judged is its presentness and its pressing character. It is "now, now, NOW!" Oh, may the Divine Spirit be pleading in some heart at this hour, saying, "Come to Jesus now, before the next word has left the speaker's mouth. Put your trust in Jesus before this service ends and you shall go your way to your chamber and to your bed justified and saved." The Spirit of God sweetly puts it, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Even as He did with Noah, who never dreamed of delays, but, when bid to come, came then and there–

"Come to the ark, the waters rise
The seas their billows fear!
While darkness gathers over the skies,
Behold a refuge near.
Come to the ark, all, all that weep
Beneath the sense of sin.
Without, deep calls unto deep
But all is peace within.
Come to the ark, before yet the flood

Your lingering steps oppose!
Come, for the door which open stood
Is now about to close."

And now notice, once more–and that is a sweet part of it–that the Lord said, "Come you and all your house into the ark." How good it is of the Lord to think of our children! That He should save us, oh, we must always bless Him for that! But that He should have a word for our wife, a word for our son and a word for our daughter–this is overflowing mercy! I have heard of a man who was unkind enough to say that he married his wife, but he did not intend to marry all her family. And it sometimes happens that your love to a person is a good deal tried by that person's relatives and friends–but when the Lord Jesus Christ takes to His heart the master or the mistress of a house, He is willing to take all the household!

He came to the jailor's house at Philippi and He looked on him with love, but He did not stay with Him only, He blessed all his household–so blessed them that they were all brought to believe in the Lord–and they were all baptized then and there! There have been other households upon which the Lord has looked in the same way. "Come you and your house," is it not? Am I reading correctly? Look at the passage! Look at it! It is not merely, "Come you and your house." We will read it again. "The Lord said to Noah, come you and all your house into the ark." "ALL." Oh, that blessed comprehensive word, "ALL!"

Then Ham was not left out! Japheth the elder, as he is called in Genesis 10:21–I know not much for him or against him, but he had faith enough to enter the ark and he was saved like the rest. Shem, the second of the household, if I may judge from his descendants, was always a religious young man, devout and attached to the worship of the true God. He also entered the ark and was saved. As for Ham, the scoundrel of the family, it might have been feared that he would not come in–but notwithstanding all that the Scripture tells us against him, he was assuredly saved in the ark.

And here was the mercy–that to Japheth, the elder, and to Shem and to Ham, the promise extended! "Come you and all your house into the ark." My dear Brother, when you are converted, yourself, it is a blessing that you have so far a hold of the Gospel, but go on to grasp more of it! "What must I do to be saved?" asked the jailor. And Paul replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house." Many cannot get to the second part of the promise. They seem satisfied if they, themselves, are saved. But oh, for that faith which takes all that the Gospel is prepared to give and pleads with God that not only I may be saved, but my house, yes, and ALL my house, without exception!

II. Here is the call, then. The Lord called effectually Shem, Ham, Japheth and their wives, so that they all came into the ark. Of that we are going to speak for a few minutes on the second head, which is THE OBEDIENCE. Noah came into the ark and his wife, and his

sons and their wives. Their obedience was unquestioning. We do not find them asking anything at all about the reason for the command–they came as they were bid. They passed through the doorway and they were all in the ark.

Fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, sons and their wives, daughters and their husbands, and all of you, oh that the blessed Spirit would put you, now, into such a frame of mind that you should at once yield to the Divine precept which says, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved!” Have you not asked enough questions? You have had some of them answered, but every answer has only helped you to invent another dozen! Oh, those questions! Those quibbles! Those debates! Those doubts! They are ruining thousands! Have you ever heard of the man who sat at the table and could not eat till he knew the pedigree of the bullock from which the joint was cut? And then he must know how it was cooked and comprehend the influence which fire has over flesh to make it eatable!

Next he must understand anatomy and know how the stomach acts upon the food and what the gastric juice is made of, and how food is assimilated. Unless he could get plain answers to every enquiry, he would not eat. He said, “Plain answers, mind, plain answers to all my questions, or I will never put a mouthful between these lips again.” Now, there was a poor countryman who came out of the field and saw the meat and potatoes, and he ate them all up

while the man was asking the questions! And very wise he was, too. I suppose it was his hunger that made him so sensible. May the Lord give you a hunger after the Gospel! And when you have it, may He grant you Grace to feed upon it and receive it into your soul. May you take what is set before you by infinite love and leave quibblers to their own folly.

I, myself, have a lot of questions, for the questions I have been asked by skeptics I have put away along with a lot more of my own which are far more difficult than theirs. I mean to bring them out one day, but not until I get to Heaven and carry all I can with me! We shall have light enough there to see! It is like reading in the dark down here. We will leave these questions till we get into the blaze of Glory and, perhaps, they will then answer themselves! Noah and his wife and his sons and their wives did not worry themselves about mysteries, but obeyed the plain command and went into the ark and were saved. They went in at once, but I will not dwell upon that. The whole eight of them passed in at once!

To get eight people to agree to go anywhere is a difficult thing. But here they were, all agreed and all ready to start. And they all went into the ark then and there. It is wondrous that Mistress Shem did not say that she could not leave all her acquaintances and forsake her father and all her relations at once. How could she tear herself away? Good Mistress Japheth might have felt bonds which hold her to her bosom friends. But so it was–the effectual call went

through all the family–men and women, and they took up their separated position, coming out of the world at once when the command came. O, blessed Spirit, give such a call as that to whole families! All these eight people came away once and for all. They could each say–

"Farewell, vain world, I must be gone!
You are no home, no rest for me.
From now on my heart must dwell alone,
And have no fellowship with thee.
Farewell, poor world, for you must die!
Even now the floods begin to rise.
I die to you without a sigh,
Save that I mourn your blinded eyes."

There was a closed door between the family of Noah and all the rest of the world. They went in to be the minority and turned out, before long, to be the majority! Oh, that men would be willing to be the minority in a wicked world and to be counted fools! People say, "If you join that Church, you just shut yourself out from all society. Nobody will ever know you anymore. You might as well be dead and buried." But, truly, when a soul gives itself to Christ, it feels itself to be dead and buried to the world and says to it, "Adieu, we are, from now on, strangers." The regenerate pass straight away from communion with this world to hold all their

communion inside the ark–to have all their fellowship in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ!

Now to Noah and to his wife and to all the family, this was the most important event that ever happened to them. When all of them passed out of the world together to find their refuge where God had provided it–it was a great day with Noah's household! What a glorious day it is with men and women when they come to Christ! Their birthday is noteworthy, but this is better! They were only born to sorrow and death at first–now are they born to Heaven and eternal life! Their wedding day? This is better! They were but joined to a mortal in bonds that death will sever, but now they are married to Christ in everlasting wedlock!

Moreover, simple as the act of going into the ark may seem, it was one of the most remarkable events in human history. When Noah and his family entered into the ark, it was a more important day than when empires rise or fall, for there would have been an utter end of the human race if it had not been for their decided action on that memorable day! So, when men give themselves to Christ, they do not know what mighty things they are doing for their posterity and for those immediately around them. Time and eternity quiver with the force of their deed! These converts will be a blessing to the town in which they live, a blessing to the society in which they move! The salvation of that woman will be the salvation of her grandchildren and of their children and so forth!

Who knows, when a man is born to God, but that there shall spring from him in future years a godly seed that shall become ministers of Christ and missionaries of the Cross? It is a grand event when a family is saved! I heard some music in the street just now and it seemed to me to be playing in good time to keep tune with the joy we ought to feel when father, mother, sons and daughters enter the ark of Christ and find salvation there! Oh, if households enter into Christ, the very bells of Heaven may ring again and again and again with a joy that has many joys within it!

Now let us go into details. The first fact is that Noah went in. This was right! Noah was the leader. The husband is the head of the household, or ought to be, and he should go to Christ first. Whether his wife comes in, or Shem, or Ham comes in, whoever will come in, or stay out, Noah goes in first, for he would obey the Lord. Head of the house, are you in the ark? Are you in Christ? You are a father. You have sons grown up around you, are you decided? You wish your family to grow up in the fear of God–I hope you do! But how can you expect it if you are not saved? If Noah had not gone into the ark, I should not expect to read that Shem and Ham and Japheth went in.

O you that are heads of households, your position is very responsible! You will have to bear much blame if your children go astray. Unless your example is decided for the Lord, they will be able to say at the Last Great Day, “Our father was half-hearted and

how could we be expected to give our hearts to God?" Next, his sons are mentioned. "Noah went in and his sons"–three fine fellows. A happy father is he who has sons that will go with him in the things of God. Sons are called in Hebrew, "builders," because they build up a man's house. May the Holy Spirit build them into the Church! I would to God there were more young men joining the Church–that more sons were decided!

You cannot expect, can you, to see the sons' wives brought unless the sons are on the Lord's side? But, I am sorry to say, they are often opposers and, when the women are brought to Christ, there are the husbands standing back and even acting as a hindrance to the religion of their wives! God grant it may not be so in any case here! O son of Noah, go into the ark with your father! O child of a godly parent, follow your father to Christ, that you may follow him to Heaven! Let Abraham's son be an Isaac and Isaac's son be a Jacob, and Jacob's son be a Joseph–and so may it go on from generation to generation!

The next person who is mentioned is the old lady–namely, Noah's wife. I give her that name because she was, no doubt, somewhere about 600 years old and she was assuredly an eminent woman. We usually describe persons who have grown sons by that name in our family circles. The wife of the father of three sons comes into the ark. I think of her as of a queenly dame with her sons and their wives. I see her coming boldly forward with a quiet grace and

firmness to go with her beloved husband–to sink or swim with him. She is casting in her lot with him not only because he is her husband, but because he had cast in his lot with God. Oh, beloved woman, advancing into years, with a grown family about you–if you have not come to Christ, I trust you may–that in your family the saved ones may be as Noah and his sons and his wife.

Last came the son's wives and what a happy circumstance for them! I was thinking, as I turned over the subject, how painful it would have been if one of the boys had not come in. And then how grievous it would have been if one of the wives had not come. If Noah had been obliged to know that one of them should be left out and he had to have the dreadful selection, whom do you suppose he would have left out? I cannot imagine! I have heard of the Irishman with his seven or eight children, and someone was willing to adopt one. But the question was–which was it to be? One is to be taken out of the family and they are not to see it again. It is to be brought up and taken care of by a stranger–the father and mother could never agree which it should be.

I hope, dear fathers and mothers, you will never agree to have one of your children lost. Make it your daily and nightly prayer, your incessant effort, your hourly desire that not only Shem and Ham and Japheth may be brought, but their wives, too–till not one shall be left behind–but the whole family shall be saved in Christ Jesus!

Now, all this was done by the sweet, effectual calling of the Divine Spirit. And let us pray tonight, each one, that the same call may be given to all our friends, kinsfolk and all assembled here– that we may be all in Christ, both now and on the Last Great Day! Amen.

Ge 7:15 • The Parable of the Ark

SERMON 3042

T*he Parable Of The Ark*

"And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life."

Genesis 7:15

CHRIST always taught by parables. Hence the popularity and the power of His teaching. The masses never were and perhaps, never will be, able to receive instruction in any other way than by parabolic illustrations. He who would be a successful minister must open his mouth in parables. He who would win the hearts of the multitude must closely imitate his Master and preach in parables which all men can understand. I believe there are few living men who are able to devise a parable. Those who do possess this rare

ability are very scarce, indeed. Nor do I profess to belong to the honorable confraternity. I have sometimes endeavored to fashion a parable and though I found it easy, at times, to manufacture a figure, yet a parable I can by no means make. I am happy to say it is not required of me to do so, for God's Word, if it is rightly used, is suggestive of a thousand parables! And I have no reason to fear that I shall be short of subjects for preaching when I am able to find such parables as I do in God's Word.

I shall preach to you this evening a parable. It shall be the parable of the ark. While I do so, you must understand that the ark was a real thing–that it was really made to float upon the waters and carry in it Noah and his family and "two and two of all flesh." This is a fact, not a myth. But I shall take this real fact and use it as a parable. Making the ark represent salvation, I shall preach to all who are within sound of my voice the parable of the ark. The ark, which saved from the floods of water, is a beautiful picture of Jesus Christ as the means of salvation, by whom multitudes of all flesh are preserved and saved from perishing in the floods of eternal Perdition!

First, then, in working out this parable I shall remark that THERE IS BUT ONE MEANS OF SALVATION.

The ark of gopher wood in the one case, and the Person of Christ in the other case, sets forth the one only means that was ever planned or provided by God. The whole world was drowned except

those happy ones who were found in the ark. The mightiest beast and the tiniest insect, the stately elephant and the loathsome reptile, the fleet horse and the creeping snail, the graceful antelope and the ugly toad–every living substance that was upon the face of the ground was involved in one common doom–save those only who were preserved alive in the ark! The noblest animals, endowed with the finest instincts, were all drowned, despite their powers of swimming (if they were not fish), save those only who were sheltered in the ark. The strongest-winged fowls that ever cut the air were all wearied in their flight and fell into the water, save those only that were housed in the ark. The proudest tenants of the forests–those that ranged fearlessly in the broad light of day or those that prowled stealthily under the cover of night. The strongest, the mightiest–all were swallowed up in the vast abyss, save those only that were commanded of God to hide themselves within the shelter of the ark.

Even so, in the application of my parable, there is only one way of salvation for all men living under Heaven. There is only one name whereby they can be saved. Would you be saved, rich man? There is no way but that whereby the povertystricken pauper is also to be saved! Would you be delivered, man of intelligence? You shall be saved in the same way as the most ignorant! “There is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,” but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. There were not two

arks, but one ark–so there are not two Saviors, but one Savior. There was no other means of salvation except the ark–so there is no plan of deliverance except by Jesus Christ the Savior of sinners! In vain you climb the lofty top of Sinai–fifteen cubits upwards shall the waters prevail! In vain you climb to the highest pinnacles of your self-conceit and your worldly merit–you shall be drowned–drowned beyond the hope of salvation for, "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Would those in my congregation be saved? They must all be saved by one way! Do they object to Christ as the plan of salvation? Then they must be damned, for there is no other hope for them! Do they think this too hard? Do they think the revealed plan of salvation too humbling? Then they must sink, even as the sons of Adam sank beneath the mighty flood and all flesh was utterly consumed by the overwhelming billows. There is but one way! Enter into the ark! Take refuge in Christ, for only thus can you be saved! But, "how shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation?" By what means shall you secure your souls, or your bodies? What plans can you devise for your security? Your refuges shall prove to be refuges of lies! The wind, the rain, the hail and the tempest shall destroy them. There is one Savior, and there is only one.

II. Proceeding with my parable, I must direct your attention to THE SIZE OF THIS ARK, for this may be comforting to you.

If you read the 15 th Chapter, you will find that the ark was of immense size. “The length of the arkshall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.” It is an old objection of infidels that there was not room enough in it for all kinds of creatures that lived on the face of the earth, but we know, on Divine authority, that if there had not been room enough in it for all the different kinds of creatures which were then alive, they would have been drowned. Yet of every kind some were safely housed so that room enough was found for them all. This is not very logical, perhaps you will say, but it is conclusive enough for us if we believe in Revelation. Yet there really is no reason for anyone to make the objection and we have no room to entertain it, since the most eminent calculators have proved to demonstration that the vessel called the ark was of immense size and was able, not merely to hold all the creatures, but all the provender they would require for the year during which it floated on the water!

I use this idea, without stopping to expound it further, to trace its analogy as a beautiful picture of the plan of salvation. Oh, what a capacious plan! The ark was a great ark, which held all kinds of creatures–and our Christ is a Great Refuge who saves all kinds of sinners! The ark was an immense vessel–in it floated a multitude of animals which were saved. Christ’s salvation is an immense salvation and in it there shall be delivered a multitude which no man can number! The narrow-minded bigot limits salvation to his

own contracted notions and he still says, “There shall none be saved except they walk arm-in-arm with me.” Poor little miserable soul! He cuts his coat according to his own fashion and declares that if men do not all cut their coats in the same way, they cannot be saved. But the Bible preaches a great salvation! It says there is a multitude that no man can number who shall stand before the Throne of God. Here is assembled a multitude of sinners, but if you all feel your need of a Savior, there is room enough for you in Heaven! Here is a multitude of hearers, but if every one of you should come to Christ, with real penitence in your hearts and true belief in Him, you would find that there was room enough for you all! That saying is still true, “And yet there is room.” There is not room enough for a Pharisee, for a man who does not feel himself a sinner, or for a hypocrite. No, nor for a formalist, but there is room enough for every convicted sinner under God’s Heaven! Our Redeemer is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. He is able to save all of you! If the Father, who has sent Him, draws you, and you come unto Him, doubt not that there is room for you! Do not think, Beloved, because we preach election, that we preach the election of a few! I find that this is a common mistake. Someone will say to me, “I don’t like your Calvinism, Sir, because it says that there are a few elected and that nobody else will be saved.”

No, Sir, but it does not say any such thing! It says they are a multitude that no man can number who have beenelected! And who knows but what you are one of them? Calvinism gives you ten thousand times more reason for hope than the Arminian preacher who stands up and says, “There is room for everybody, but I do not think there is any special Grace to make them come. If they won’t come, they won’t come, and that is the end of it. It is their own fault and God will not make them come.” The Word of God says they cannot come, yet the Arminian says they can. The poor sinner feels that he cannot, yet the Arminian declares positively that he could if he wanted to. And though the poor sinner feels sometimes that he would if he could, and groans over his inability, this blind guide tells him it is all nonsense! Whereas, it is, in truth, God’s own work. You must feel it and you may plead against yourself on account of it, but you shall comefor all that. He will not plead against you, but He will put strength in you. There is more hope for you in the pure Gospel of the blessed God than there is in those fancies and fictions of men which are nowadays preached everywhere, except in a few places where God has reserved unto Himself a people who have not bowed their knee to the Baal of the age!

III. In the third place, note that THE ARK WAS A SAFE REFUGE.

Noah was commanded to make an ark of gopher wood and, lest there should be any leakage in it, he was commanded to "pitch it within and without with pitch." The ark had no harbor to go to and we never read that Noah called up Shem, Ham and Japheth to work at the pumps, nor yet that they had any, for there was not a leak in her. No doubt there were storms during that year, but we do not hear that the ship was ever in danger of being wrecked. The rocks, it is true, were too low down to touch her bottom, for, "fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail, and the mountains were covered." Rising 27 feet above the loftiest mountains, she had no quicksands to fear–they were too deep below her keel. But of course she was exposed to the winds. Sometimes the hurricane might have rattled against her and driven her along. Doubtless, at another time, the hail beat on her top, and the lightning scarred the brow of night, but the ark sailed on, not one was cast out from her, nor were her sailors wearied with constant pumping to keep out the water, or frequent repairs to keep her secure. Though the world was inundated and ruined, that one ark sailed triumphantly above the waters! The ark was safe and all who were in her were safe, too.

Now, Sinner, the Christ I preach to you is such a refuge as that. His Gospel has no flaw in it. As the ark never sank, and the elements never prevailed against it, so Christ never failed. He cannot fail. All the principalities and powers are subject to Him. Those who are in Christ are sheltered from every storm. They shall

never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hands. Remember that God gave the pattern and Noah perfected the work of the ark before a single fountain of the great deep was broken up, or one drop of the desolating storm fell from the vengeful clouds. And it is not less true that our glorious Lord was set up in the counsels of eternity, a perfect Christ before the clouds of vindictive wrath began to brew on account of man's iniquity! And His mighty work of mediation was finished before your poor soul was invited to take shelter in Him. Oh, I think as the angels looked out of the windows of Heaven upon the swelling tide and saw how securely the ark rode upon its surface, they never doubted that all who were inside were as safe as the ark itself–and is there any reason to doubt that those who are in Christ are as safe as Christ? "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abides forever." They that trust in the Lord are blessed! They are like trees planted by rivers of water–their leaf shall not wither and whatever they do shall prosper. If you once come to Jesus and trust in Him, there is no fear of your sinking! There will be storms, tempests will beat around you–these you will be sure to have–but you will be too high up ever to strike on the rocks. If you are once on board the Good Ship of Salvation, you will be lifted up too high above the floods to be swallowed in the quicksands. With cheerful heart I can "commend you to God, and to the word of His Grace." Christ will preserve you!

Believers, could you give up to anybody the Doctrine of your Security in Christ? No, I know you could not. Touch one of my Brothers or Sisters in the Lord who attends this Chapel on that point and you will soon get your answer. I have sometimes heard disputes outside the chapel door, when some who do not believe that Truth of God, have been disputing it, and I have felt confident that I might leave its defense in your hands. There are mighty men of valor among you who are not ashamed to uphold the whole counsel of God, even as I am constantly anxious to declare it!

IV. Now I go to another part of the parable. The creatures in the ark, of course, needed light–but it is a singular thing that THERE WAS ONLY ONE WINDOW IN THE ARK.

In the 16 th Chapter we read, "A window shall you make for the ark." I have often wondered how allthe creatures could see through one window, but I have not wondered what was meant by it, for I think it is easy to point the moral. There is only one window whereby Christians ever get their Light of God. All who come to Christ and receive salvation by Him are illuminated in one way. That one window of the ark may fitly represent to us the ministry of theHoly Spirit. There is only one Light which lightens every man who comes into the world, if he is lightened at all. Christ is the Light and it is the Holy Spirit of truth by whom Christ is revealed. Thus we discern sin, righteousness and judgment. No other conviction is of any real value. As we are brought under the

teaching of the Spirit, we perceive our guilt and misery–and our redemption and refuge in Christ! There is only one window to the ark. “Why,” says one, “there are some of us who see light through one minister and some through another.” True, my Friend, but still, there is only one window. We ministers are only like panes of glass and you can obtain no light through us but by the operations of the same Spirit that works in us. And even then, the different panes of glass give different shades of light. There you have your fine polished preacher–he is a bit of stained glass, not very transparent, made to keep the light out rather than to let it in! There is another pane. He is a square-cut diamond. He seems an old-fashioned preacher, but he is a bit of good glass, and lets the light through. Another one is cut after a more refined style, but he is plain and simple, and the light shines through him. But there is only one light and only one window! He who reveals to us “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” is the Holy Spirit. We have only one Instructor if we preach the Truth of God. One Brother may be preaching this night in the Church of England, another may be holding forth the Word of God among the Independents and others among the Baptists, but they have only one Spirit if they are taught of God. There was only one window to the ark and though there were first, second, and third stories to the ark, all saw out of one window. And the little saint who is on the first story, gets light through the one window of the Spirit. And the

saint who has been brought up to the second story, gets light through the same window. And he who has been promoted to the loftiest story has to get light through the same window, too! There is no other means of our seeing except through the one window made to the ark, the window of the Holy Spirit! Have we looked through that? Have we seen the clear blue sky above us? Or have we known that when our eye of faith was dim and we could see nothing at all, still our Master was at the helm and would preserve us through all our darkness and difficulties?

Now, if you will read the chapter (Gen 6) attentively, you will find it said, "ROOMS shall you make in the ark" (Gen 6:14).

When I read that, I thought it would serve for a point in the parable, seeing that it may teach my dear friends that they are not all to be put together–in the ark, rooms were made. Those who lived in one room did not stand or sit with those who lived in another–but they were all in the same ark. So I have sometimes thought–"There are our Wesleyan friends, some of them love the Lord. I have no doubt they are in the ark, though they do not occupy the same apartment as we do. There are our Baptist friends who love the Lord–we welcome them in our room. Then there are our Independent friends, those also love the Lord. They are in another room and our Presbyterian and Episcopalian Brothers and Sisters–in all these various sections are some who are called of God and brought into the ark–though they are in different rooms." But,

Beloved, they are all in one ark. There are not two Gospels. As long as I can find a man who holds the same Gospel, it does not matter what order of church government he adopts if he is in Christ Jesus– it is of little consequence what room he is in so long as he is in the ark. If he belongs to those of whom it is written, "By Grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," I will call him Brother.

We cannot all expect to be in one room. The elephants did not live with the tigers and the lions did not lie down with the sheep. There were different rooms for different classes of creatures–and it is a good thing there are different denominations, for I am sure some of us would not get on very comfortably with certain denominations. We would need more liberty than we could get in the Church of England. We would want more freedom than we could get with the Presbyterians. We would need more soundness of Doctrine than we could get with the Wesleyans, and we would want a little more brotherly love, perhaps, than we could get with some of the Strict Baptists. We could not entirely agree with them all. And happy is he who can sometimes put his head into one room, and sometimes into another, and can say to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, "Grace be with you all, so long as you are but in the Ark."

VI. But though there were many rooms in the ark, I want you to notice that THERE WAS ONLY ONE DOOR.

It is said, “And the door of the ark shall you set in the side thereof.” And there is only one door into the ark of our salvation, and that is Christ. There are not two Christs preached–one in one chapel and another in another. “If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that which you have received, let him be accursed.” There is but one Gospel. We take in the righteous out of all sections, but we do not take in all sections! We pick out the godly from among them all, for we believe “there is a remnant according to the election of Grace” in the vilest of them. But still, there is only one door–and “he that enters not by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.”

There was only one door to the ark. Some animals, like the giraffe, whose heads are higher than those of other animals, might have to bow their necks to go in by the same entrance as the waddling ducks which naturally stoop, even as they enter a barn. And so the lofty ones of this world must bend their stiff necks and bow their proud heads if theywould enter into the Church by Christ. The swift horse and the slow-paced snail must enter by one door. So too the scribes and Pharisees must come in the same way as the publicans and harlots or be forever excluded. All the beasts God had chosen went in by the one door–and if any had stood outside and said, “We shall not enter in that way,” they would have been standing outside till the flood overtook and destroyed them, for there was only one door. There is only one way of salvation and

there is only one means of getting into it–“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” But “he that believes not,” whoever he may be, must “be damned.” There is no hope of any other way of salvation! He that comes in by the door shall be saved–and Jesus says, “I am the door.”

VII. Proceeding in the parable, you will notice that THIS ARK HAD SUNDRY STORIES IN IT. They were not all of one height–there were lower, second and third stories.

This is, to me, a figure of the different kinds of Christians who are carried to Heaven. There is my poor mourning Brother who lives in the bottom story. He is always singing–

“Lord, what a wretched land is this!”

He lives just near the keel, on the bare ribs of the ark. He is never very happy. At times a little light reaches him from the window, but generally he is so far from the light that he walks in darkness and sees very little, indeed. His state is that of constant groaning–he loves to go and hear “ the corruption preachers.” He revels with delight in the deep experience ofthe tried family of God. He likes to hear it said, “We must, through much tribulation, enter into the Kingdom of God.” If you paint the Christian life as a very gloomy one, he will like your picture, for his is gloomy, indeed. He is always poring over texts such as this, “O, wretched man that I am!” He is down in the lower story of the ark. But never mind–he is in the ark, so we will not scold him, though he has little faith and very

much doubt. “With lower, second, and third stories shall you make it.” There is one of our Brothers who is up a little higher and he is saying, “I cannot exactly say that I am safe, yet I have a hope that my head will be kept above the billows, though it goes hard with me at times. Now and then, too, the Lord bestows ‘some drops of Heaven’ upon me. Sometimes, I am like the mountains of Zion, where ‘the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.’” He is in the second story, but he is no safer, though he is happier, than the man on the ground floor! All are safe so long as they are in the ark! Yet, for my part, I like the uppermost story best. I had rather live up there where I can sing, “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.” I love the place where the saints are “teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”

I confess that I am obliged to go down to the lower story sometimes, but I like running up the ladder to the third deck, yet I am no more safe when I am in the top story than I am when I am in the bottom one. The same wave that would split the ship and drown me, were I in the lowest story, would drown me if I were in the highest. However high some of us and, however low others of us may be, the same vessel bears us all, for we are one crew in one boat–and there is no dividing us. Come, then, my poor desponding Hearer, is that your place, somewhere down at the bottom of the hold, along with the ballast? Are you always in trials and troubles?

Ah, well, fear not, so long as you are in the ark! Do not be afraid. Christ is your strength and righteousness. The ark was, in each and every department, a secure shelter to all who were shut in!

"Ah," says one, "but I am down there, Sir, always at the bottom, and I am afraid the vessel will sink." Do not be so silly! Why should your heart beget such fears? I knew a man who went up the Monument and when he had got half way, he declared that it vibrated and was about to fall, and he would come down. But the Monument has not fallen. It is as safe as ever and if 50 like he, or fifty thousand, went up, the Monument would be just as firm! But some poor nervous Christians are afraid Christ will let them sink. A wave comes against the side of the ship, but it does not hurt the ship, it only drives the wedges in more tightly. The Master is at the helm–will not that assure your heart? It has floated over so many billows–will not that increase your confidence? It must, indeed, be a strong billow that will sink it! No, there never shall be such an one! And where, do you think, is the power that could destroy the souls who are sheltered in the Ark of our salvation? Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect, since Christ has died and God the Father has justified us? Happy assurance! We are all safe, so surely as we are in the Ark of the Covenant. The ark floated triumphantly on amidst all the dangers and when it finally rested on Mount Ararat and God spoke to Noah, saying, "Go forth of the ark, you, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons' wives with you.

Bring forth with you every living thing that is with you," the inventory was complete and all were safely landed. So, too, will Christ present the perfect number of all His people to the Father in The Last Day–not one shall perish!

VIII. This brings me to notice, in the last place, THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF ANIMALS THAT ENTERED INTO THE ARK. Listen to the statement–"Of every clean beast you shall take to you by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female."

This great ark was meant to save both clean and unclean beasts! In like manner, the great salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ is intended for sinners of all kinds, the clean and the unclean. There are some people in the world whom we may well reckon in the former class. They are in every way respectable. Their conduct in society is beyond reproach–exact in their commerce, they were never known to erase a figure in their account books–they would not defraud their neighbors, nor would they be so negligent of their fair fame as to do a disorderly action. Their character is so amiable that their mothers might regard them from childhood as almost without a fault. They have grown up to mature years without the hideous taint of immorality–their practice has been always akin to piety. Their zeal for the Law of God has been truly commendable so that Christ, Himself, might have looked on them and loved them, although He would have tenderly and pitifully admonished

them as He said to the young man who came to Him, “One thing you lack.” Yes, but the desolations of the flood are so universal that there is no escape except in the ark. The clean beasts must go into the ark to be saved–and there is not a soul among you so good, nor a character so clean–but you have need of Christ, whether you know your need or not! You may be ever so good and excellent but you will need a Savior. There is something about your character that is not clean. Your lives require purification which you can never find except in Christ.

But then the unclean beasts went in likewise. Here is the opposite class. Are there not some of you, (we know there are), whose education from early childhood has been vicious–certainly not virtuous? From your earliest recollections you have gone into the paths of open profanity. You have dived into the kennel and have steeped yourselves up to the very lips in the gall of bitterness. You have been drunks, swearers, Sabbath-breakers and injurious. You have indulged in all kinds of iniquities. You are just the sort of persons we should liken to unclean beasts. Yes–then the ark was built on purpose for you, too! The most moral man will stand no better when he comes before God than you will. He must be saved just as you are. You must both be saved by the one common salvation, or not at all. There is but one Savior for all who are saved–there is but one Redemption for everyone of you who really is redeemed. There is but one ark for the clean and the unclean!

“Ah,” says someone, “I suppose, then, the unclean beasts come from the courts, the alleys and the filthy slums of the metropolis.” Oh, no, not particularly so! We can find the unclean as plentifully in St. James’s as in St. Giles’s. There are some in what you call “the higher circles” who, from infancy, have reveled in vice. Soon did you learn to break the rule of your parents' authority. You laughed at your mother’s tears, you sneered at your father’s counsels–you drank up iniquity in your schooldays, as the greedy ox drinks up water. You made a boast of your wild riots. You tell of your wickedness, now, with an air of impertinent triumph. You brag of having sowed your wild oats. So infamous has been your career, in spite of good example and education, that I suppose, “Newgate” could hardly produce a class of unclean beasts more to be loathed than you are!

Well, now, to each class of sinners I preach. If you feel and deplore your uncleanness, there is mercy for you, unclean as you are. I beseech you, come into the Ark and you will never be turned out! If God shall compel you to come as He did those creatures, He will never, never drive you away. The ark was for the unclean as well as for the clean–for the swine as well as for the sheep–for the poisonous asp as well as for the harmless dove–for the carnivorous raven as well as for the turtle-dove. All creatures came in–some of every sort. You swinish sinner, one of Satan’s hogs, come in and you shall be safe! And you lamb-like sinner, gentle and mild, come

in, for there is no other Ark for you, and you will be drowned unless you come in by the same door into the great Ark of salvation!

Let us divide these creatures once more. There were creeping things and there were flying things. On the morningwhen the ark door was opened, you might have seen, in the sky, a pair of eagles, a pair of sparrows, a pair of vultures, a pair of ravens, a pair of hummingbirds, pairs of all kinds of birds that ever cut the azure, that ever floated on wing, or whispered their song to the evening gales. In they came. But if you had watched down on the earth, you would have seen come creeping along a pair of snails, a pair of snakes and a pair of worms. There ran along a pair of mice. There came a pair of lizards and in there flew a pair of locusts. There were pairs of creeping creatures as well as pairs of flying creatures. Do you see what I mean by that? There are some of you who can fly so high in knowledge that I should never be able to scan your great and extensive wisdom–and others of you so ignorant that you can hardly read your Bibles. Never mind! The eagle must come down to the door and the ant must go up to it. There is only one entrance for you all–and as God saved the birds that flew, so He saved the reptiles that crawled!

Are you a poor, ignorant, crawling creature that never was noticed–without intellect, without repute, without fame, without honor? Come along, crawling one! God will not exclude you! I

have often wondered how the poor snail crawled in, but I daresay he started many a year before! And some of you have started for years and still you keep crawling on. Ah, then, come along with you, poor snail! If I could just pick you up and help you on a yard or two, I would be glad to do it. It is strange how long you have been near to the Ark, but not yet in–how long you have been near the portals of the Church, but never joined it.

Remark again, they all got in. Do not fear if you are, in your own esteem, a crawling reptile–you may have thelowest possible opinion of yourself–still come! Nobody forbids you to come, however mean you are! Yes, and the meaner you are, the more willing do I feel to invite you, for Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance! What a strange assemblage was there that morning! But Noah was positively commanded to bring all sorts of creatures into the ark. He might have thought some too vile and worthless to preserve, yet his orders were to bring them in. When Peter was commanded to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, God showed him in a vision, "all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air," and said to him, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." "Not so, Lord," said Peter, "for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." And, lo, "the Voice spoke unto him again the second time, What God has cleansed, that call you not common." In Christ there are some out of every nation, kindred, tongue and

people who shall be saved to the praise of God and the Lamb forever and ever!

Moreover, it was a mysterious impulse by which God moved the creatures to come. The sight must have been imposing–the elephants, the camels, the giraffes, the rhinoceroses and all the huge creatures walking in side by side (as it were) with the timorous hares, the tiny mice, the lizards, ferrets, squirrels, beetles, grasshoppers and all such insignificant-looking little creatures. So it has been in the Church of Christ and so it shall be to the end of her history–"As many as were ordained to eternal life believed," though their characters, by nurture, were as various as this globe has ever witnessed–rude as barbarism's foulest sink, or polished as Grecian culture ever knew!

Now, dear Hearer, I do not care about asking you who you are, or what you are–that has nothing to do with me. What I ask you is–Are you in the Ark, or are you not? You are saying, perhaps, "Sir, I do not care for you–whyshould you enquire about my condition?" But there will be a day when you will be like those who spoke to Noah and said, "Go along, old graybeard–build your ark on the dry land, like a fool, as you are–build your ark there on the hillside where the waters cannot come. As for us, we shall eat and drink and if, tomorrow we die, what will it matter, for we have eaten and drunk the merrier while we have had the opportunity." In vain did Noah warn them that the waters would surely come. He seemed to

them as one to mock, and they laughed at him. Even so, when I preached to you, this morning, of the Resurrection, [Sermon #s66, 67, Volume 2–THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD– Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org] some of you may have mocked and thought that I was but pursuing a wild reverie of imagination.Ah, but how different was their tune when the rain fell and "the same day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up"! They doubtless changed their notes when the clouds began to empty themselves in fury, when the very earth did crack, and its heart was dissolved and the mighty fluid gushed up to devour them all! Did they think Noah was a fool when the last man stood on the last mountaintop and cried in vain for help?

I saw, some time ago, a picture which I think time will never erase from my memory. It was a picture of a man who had been climbing up to the top of the last mountain and the floods were coming around him. He had his old father on his back. His wife was clasping him round his waist and he had one arm round her. She held one child at her breast and with her other hand she grasped another. In the picture one child was represented as just letting go, the wife dropping and the father clinging to a tree on the top of the hill. The branches were breaking and it was being torn up by the roots. Such a scene of agony I never saw depicted before– yet such a scene was likely enough to have been real when the

waters entirely covered the earth. They had climbed up to the top of the last hill–and now they sank. False hopes gave place to fell despair–and so it will be with you, you careless ones, unless you take shelter in the Ark!

Do you ask me, “How can we do that?” You look anxious, some of you. Listen, then, while I finish, as I have often done before, with the simple statement which contains our authority to preach and your admonition to believe! Jesus said, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.”

[PUBLISHERS' NOTE–It has been necessary, from lack of space, to omit nearly two pages. But, even in its condensed form, it is a wonderful discourse to have been delivered by a preacher only 21 years of age!] –Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Ge 7:16 • Shut In or Shut Out

SERMON 1613

Shut In Or Shut Out

"The Lord shut him in."

Genesis 7:16

NOAH was a very different man from the rest of those who lived in his time, for the Grace of God had set a division between him and them. They forgot God and Noah feared Him. They lived for things seen and temporal and he lived in sight of the invisible. When he was building the ark, he was in a miserable minority, as men count heads. And, even after 120 years of ministry, when his ark was built and his family entered it, they were eight against many millions–an insignificant few, as men would say–a pitiful sect among mankind. Who could imagine that the eight would be

right and all the millions wrong? Where God is, there is the majority!

But very clearly there was a very marked distinction between Noah and his household and all the rest of mankind. Yet, great as that distinction was, throughout 120 years there was no impassable gulf between the two parties. Although Noah could not, would not go to them, yet they that would, might pass to him. If they would hear, believe and obey, they, too, might be among the company whom God had blessed and whom He would surely preserve from destruction. When the 120 years were over and God's Spirit would no longer strive with men, there stood the great ark with its vast door wide open and Noah still continued to preach and to declare that all who would pass within that open portal into the ark of safety should be preserved from the coming destruction.

Outside that door death would reign universally, but all would be peace within. When the last seven days of Grace had come to a close, the Lord began His work of justice by separating Noah. "The Lord shut him in." Then there was a more marked difference between Noah and the rest of mankind. He that opens and no man shuts. He that shuts and no man opens–even He had interposed an impassable barrier between Noah and those that believed not. Mercy's gate was shut! The time of long-suffering had come to a close. Brothers and Sisters, the Church of God stands, at the present moment, in the world very much in the same condition as

Noah and his family! The door of the ark is still wide open and it is our business to persuade, constrain and compel men, with all our might, to come in!

Not without success have our entreaties been, for many have entered the ark of salvation which is found in the Person of our Divine Lord Jesus. These make up with us the chosen family of God who shall be safe when the world is deluged with the last devouring fire. But the time comes–it comes to each man in death and it will come to the whole company of the ungodly in the day when the Lord Jesus shall descend from Heaven with a shout–that the door shall be shut and it shall be said, "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from here to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from there."

Character will become unchangeable! He that is unjust will be unjust, still, and he that is filthy will be filthy, still. My heart trembles as I think of this matter! There is a joy in being shut in with the saints, but a great grief in knowing that many will be shut out. I shall labor so to set forth this Truth of God that, perhaps before the door closes, a goodly company may cry, "We will come with you, for we perceive that the Lord is with you." Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto the Lord–but until those water floods break forth they may come–and they shall

find a glad welcome! For it is written, “Him that comes to Me I will in nowise cast out.”

Our meditation will be arranged under two heads which may readily be remembered–shut in and shut out. They stand in very distinct contrast and admit of no third condition.

First, let us think of Truths of God which range themselves under the head of SHUT IN. This is a blessed text. Oh that the Spirit of God may help me to preach from it and you to enjoy it! Observe, then, that Noah was shut in–shut in the ark. Noah’s condition as to an evil world was now one of permanent separation. He was severed from the world and his separation was beyond recall. There is a time in the human character when it has some good thing in it towards the Lord God of Israel and yet that good thing may be lost. But there is another and happier time when the truly converted have stepped over the boundary and shall never go back to corruption. They are dead and their life is hid with Christ in God–hidden beyond further damage or death. They are, from then on, kept by the power of God unto salvation–crucified unto the world and the world unto them.

There was a time when, speaking after the manner of men, Noah might have given up his testimony and sided with the ungodly mass. But that possibility is all over, for the door is shut–the Lord has shut him in. There was no wish in Noah’s heart to come out and he could not come out. The deed was done and could not be

undone–the bolt was turned and could not be withdrawn. Noah was shut in by a hand which is not given to undo its own work! I believe that this blend of character and condition has happened to all Believers who can truly say that they are dead unto the world. Dying unto the world is the way of our salvation! By this process we pass into newness of life. I dare say when that door was shut, the men of the world said, “Look at old Noah! He has gone into his coffin. He is as good as dead and buried.”

Yes, that was exactly what they were meant to see and to say! Peter says, “The like figure whereunto also baptism does now save us.” He does not say that baptism saves us, but that it is a “like figure” of the way of salvation. The ark and immersion set forth the same Truth of God. The man is “buried in baptism,” to signify that he is dead to the world, wherein, also, he rises, again, to show his fellowship with Christ in resurrection and the fact that he has risen to newness of life. Baptism is a picture of the way of salvation, just as Noah’s ark was. Entrance into the ark and submergence beneath a 40 days' deluge of rain was a fit type of death and burial–and the rising of the ark above the waters fitly sets forth resurrection to a new life.

Noah underwent burial to all the old things that he might come out into a new world and, even so, we die in Christ that we may live with Him. This is the doctrine, but the experience is grand! Beloved, it is a great mercy when a man can feel in his own soul

that God has fixed, forever, his condition towards the ungodly. We have come out, my Brethren, from among men just as Abraham did when he left his fatherland and went into the land of which he knew nothing but that God had said that He would give it to him and to his seed. It is written concerning Abraham and the other Patriarchs that, "doubtless if they had been mindful of the place from where they came out, they had opportunity to return," but they did not return–it entered not into their minds and hearts to do so. They had as fully left Padanaram behind them as if they had been dead and buried to it and their life showed, each one of them, to be a pilgrim and a sojourner with God.

Even so with Believers! The Lord has called us out and set us apart unto Himself. Therefore a door is shut behind us and we cannot go back. We are like Bunyan's Pilgrim–we must go forward, for we have no armor for our backs. There is no inducement to go back if we fairly consider the matter. The City of Destruction which we have left is to be burnt with fire–shall we go back to that? The enemies we have fought and encountered are left behind–shall we seek them to fight again, or to become their friends? Sin is bitter to us, it has already broken our teeth as with gravel–shall we go back to it? What inducement have we to return to the house of bondage? No, by God's Grace, "Forward," is our motto till we come to "the city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

Brethren, I am always glad when I can feel, concerning any of you, that you have finally done with the world and may be numbered with the irreconcilables, for, alas, I fear there are too many who have so questionably come out of Sodom that their hearts are still there and they are apt to cast lingering looks towards the accursed city. Ah me! What if any of you should become pillars of salt! "Remember Lot's wife!" But when, like Noah, you are divided from the world's pursuits by God's own act, then is it well with you! Noah was shut in and could not follow after the festivities and worldliness of men. They were eating and drinking–marrying and given in marriage–but to Noah the dance and the viol, the feast and the revel called in vain! He could not now hoard up wealth, nor seek for fame among the sons of men. He was utterly exiled and excluded from all those things which charmed the minds of his contemporaries. He was out of the fashion, yes, out of the world!

He was shut out, too, from all their possessions. Even from his own farm he was now expatriated. Blessed is that man who, whatever he has, has it as though he had it not–he sets no store by earthly things and does not lock up his soul in his iron safe. He is shut out from the things which rust and corrupt, so that they are not his god, nor his treasure. Noah was divided from the evil generation among which he dwelt by an act of God–here was his safety! Adam was put in Paradise by God, but he was never shut in

by God and, therefore, very soon he left his first estate and wandered among thorns and thistles. But Noah was both put in the ark and shut in the ark–and, therefore, he never left his shelter until the Lord bade him come forth to possess the new world.

Blessed are the men of whom the Lord Jesus can say, "They are not of the world." Such have passed by death into life and are members of a new race who shall go forth with joy and be led forth with peace, for they shall inherit the earth! Blessed is that man who has crossed the Rubicon, deciding to be on the Lord's side whatever others may do. Blessed is the man who has burnt his boats behind him, having landed in a country from which he will never retreat. I would gladly be one who can cease to be, but cannot cease to be a Christian! I would gladly be on who can die, but cannot deny his Lord! I would gladly be one who will, if necessary, go with Him to prison and to death–and cannot do otherwise–for the love of Christ constrains me. Then is the will most truly free when it is under the sweet dominion of infinite love! This is true liberty–to be led about in triumph in every place, bound with the silken cords of gratitude–a captive to the power of Grace! O happy man who can truly say that from now on he is "shut in" because he is born again and, thus, entirely changed!

In the olden times a newly converted man who became an eminent saint was met in the street by a woman who had, at other times, tempted him to sin. He took no notice of her and at last she

cried out, “Do you not know me? It is I.” “Ah,” said the new man, “but it is not I.” No, he was not the man who could take pleasure in uncleanness. He could no longer sin, for he was born of God! Our inner life shuts us in to holiness and the wounds of Jesus seal the door. The goodness of God interposes a barrier between us and evil, for we say with Joseph, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” “How can we, that are dead to sin, live any longer in sin? Therefore our prayer is that of Toplady–

“Oh nail me to the sacred wood,
There tie me with Your Spirit’s chain!
There seal me with Your fastening blood,
Nor ever let me loose again!
There let me bow my suppliant knee,
And own no other Lord but Thee!”

We must now remark, secondly, that Noah was not only shut in, but he was shut in by God. There was the excellence of it–“The Lord shut him in.” No man can shut in as the Lord can! I cannot shut professors into the ways of godliness as I would wish. Alas, with all my preaching, many wander and try to be members of the Church and citizens of the world, too! We have among us avowed lovers of Christ who act too much like “lovers of pleasure.” I have preached no liberty to sin, as some do, but I have declared that, “strait is the gate and narrow is the way,” but yet these men make excursions into the broad road. I would still hammer at the door of

the ark, in hope of shutting it closed and keeping it so, but it is little that I can do. If Noah had shut himself in, he might have come out again. And if any of the world outside had shut him in, he would probably have burst open the door.

But "the Lord shut him in" and, therefore, sure work was made of it. Oh to be enclosed by Almighty Grace! The Lord has shut His people in unto Himself by His choice of them in Christ Jesus, by His redemption of them from among men and by His sanctifying them to be a peculiar people unto Himself. Yes, the Lord has done it–"The Lord shut him in." Take notice that this was very close shutting, so as to keep out the water. I fancy that if you saw a huge vessel lying upon the dry land where the floods would come to float it, you would be very anxious about that great opening in its side. It was evidently a huge doorway, for a pair of elephants had passed through it, so that it was a gaping leak which would take in enough water in an hour to sink the ark to the bottom!

How could the great door be closed? All the timbers are waterproofed and the ship is well caulked and pitched within and without, but all will go for nothing unless we can secure the big door. Merely to shut the door will be of no use. When the rain begins to fall in torrents from above and the waters leap up from below, and the ship commences to rise, she will take in any quantity of water at the points where the door fits into the wood. Shipwrights will be needed and the caulkers and the men with the

pitch must come. No shipwright could manage to shut so huge a door close enough for safety unless you give him time and call in the help of other workers. Therefore “the Lord shut him in” because nobody else could safely be trusted to shut such a door, against which a forty days' tempest was to beat most furiously!

What a mercy it is that when we get into Christ by faith and are shut in from the world with Him, that we are perpreserved in Christ Jesus unto eternal life by the same Divine might. Beloved, there is no doubt about the salvation of those who are in Christ, for none can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Never has a soul perished trusting in Jesus and never shall a soul so perish, for though salvation is so difficult that the righteous scarcely are saved, yet when the Lord Jehovah puts His hand to the work, it is done well and done forever! In Noah’s case the huge chasm that would have let in the water-floods was perfectly closed up. Even so, all the yawning leaks and openings of our fall and sin are closed by the Grace of God and, in Christ Jesus, we are secure– the Lord has shut us in!

That door was also shut very fast to prevent the entrance of enemies from the outside. For who can tell? I should fancy that when the waters began to rise, when they were up to the ankles, or knee deep, those who had, before, ridiculed the Patriarch’s barge would assemble around that door and clamorously demand to be admitted, resolved, if refused, to force their way in. But it would

have been in vain. God had shut the door and no violence could force it open–by push of crowd or leverage of strength. Even so it is with us–we are protected against every onslaught of the enemies of our soul. Come life, come death, things present or things to come–God has appointed salvation! Come temptations of every sort, come craft or assault of devils–none can force the doorway and come at us for our destruction.

"At evening let them return; and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. But I will sing of Your power; yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning: for You have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble. Unto You, O my Strength, will I sing." This Divine shutting in of Noah was very necessary, for I suppose that no one else could have moved the gigantic door upon its enormous hinges. It was probably too massive to have been stirred by Noah or his united family. It must have been a moment of wonder and awe when that stupendous door began silently to move of its own accord, as though an invisible hand was carefully closing it so that not a crevice should be made through which water could penetrate!

The ark was soon as complete as if it had never exhibited an opening from stem to stern. You and I need shutting into Christ by a Divine hand or it never will be done securely. When a soul is brought to Christ it is by Divine Grace, but the whole is not done then–the grand difficulty is to keep us in Christ, for without

continued Grace we shall still perish in spite of all the arrangements of redeeming love. How many have ventured to sea in the galleys of their own resolve and have perished there! How many have hoped to shut themselves in with Christ by the mere force of personal determination, but the leakage of their own depraved heart has drowned them! But, oh, when God has brought us into union with Jesus, He shuts us in and we are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

The great door of Covenant faithfulness is shut behind the Believer and he is surrounded by the power and Grace of God, even as Noah was housed within the strong timbers of the ark. There is no crack nor cranny through which the floods of wrath can penetrate–Omnipotent Love has shut us in! And the Lord did this not only necessarily, but graciously. I call your attention to the change of the names in the text, a very significant change indeed–"They that went in, went in male and female of all flesh: as God had commanded him: and the Lord"–that is, Jehovah–"shut him in." Elohim, as the Creator and Preserver, takes care of living things to preserve them, but the Lord, even Jehovah, the covenanting God, interposes in great mercy to protect His chosen servant!

It was Jehovah who entered into solemn league and Covenant with His servant, Noah, that He would preserve him in the ark and float him into the new world in it. And as Jehovah, the Covenanting

One, He shut Noah in. There is no security like that which is given us by the Covenant of Grace. The hand which was lifted to swear our safety has also been outstretched to effect it! The everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, guarantees salvation to all who are represented by the great Head and Surety of that Covenant, even our Lord Jesus. Love and power cooperate with faithfulness and truth to keep the chosen from all danger. Dwell much upon the Covenant and note the immutable pledges by which it is secured and the immortal principles upon which it is founded! Try to suck out the delicious sweetness which is to be found in the hive of the Covenant, for if you are an advanced child of God, no form of the Truth of God can be more nourishing or refreshing to your mind.

The doctrines which spring out of the Covenant are peculiarly comforting to believing minds. The promises of God are yes and amen in Christ Jesus and can never fail nor change, since the Covenant stands fast forever and ever. Its tenure is free and Sovereign Grace and it cannot be disannulled. Here is a line of it, "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." With such a promise does Jehovah shut us in with Christ Jesus in matchless kindness and unspeakable love. Notice, once again, that this deed was very instructive to Noah. It must have been so. Noah had ceased to live according to the mere senses of the body and had come to perceive his absolute dependence upon God, but he was made, by the opened door, to see that dependence most clearly. By

Divine orders he had built an ark on dry land and when it was built, Noah might have said, “Now I feel safe.” But he could not say so, for there was a gaping hole in the side of the ark–a vast aperture which he could not close up.

It was an occasion of mercy to mankind and Noah was probably glad to see it open that he might still preach righteousness and warn men to escape, saying, “The door is open! Come, you great sinners! Enter, you sons of Anak. Come and be saved!”–

“Come to the ark, before yet the flood
Your lingering steps oppose!
Come, for the door which open stood
Is now about to close!”

Yet when he had done his sermon and went home, perhaps he said to his wife, “Beloved, how can this ark save us? That door, if ever the floods come, will be a dreadful danger to us. We cannot shut it! What is to be done? We must leave it with God. We are still dependent upon a Divine interposition and Jehovah will stretch out His hand and shut the door effectually so that we shall float above the deluge.”

In this condition of daily dependence, the Lord would have His people abide, conscious to the very last that in Him, only, do they live! “Without Me you can do nothing.” We are entirely dependent upon our faithful, loving God for everything! If I were to get up to Heaven’s wall and gaze in through the pearly gates, I know that if

God did not give me Grace to take the last step, I would die upon the threshold of the Celestial City! We rest upon God at the first for hope and pardon and the same is the case to the end. “My Soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” You will never be able to throw your cap up and say, “I have done with further prayer and watchfulness, for I need no longer depend on God.” Never will you cease to look unto the Lord for your salvation till you shall be safely housed in Heaven–

“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in.”

Then joyfully will you confess that salvation is of the Lord and glorify your great God and Savior. Thus the text tells us that Noah was shut in and that he was shut in by God.

But now let us remember that he was shut in with God, for in the first verse of the chapter we read, “The Lord said unto Noah, Come you and all your house into the ark.” This clearly shows that the Lord was already in the ark. O what a joy it is to know that when a soul is buried to the world it lives with Christ! “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.” God is in Christ Jesus and we are in Christ Jesus–and thus we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus! The Tabernacle of God among men is the Person of Christ! And when we are joined unto the Lord and become

members of His body, we are alive unto God and have fellowship with Him!

It is a blissful privilege to be hidden away in the Person of Christ, for, "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him." You are in Him, that is true, joined unto the Lord in one spirit. Oh the fellowship the saved have with God! How cheering! How near! How elevating! How strengthening! God has left all the world to its own destruction, but in the ark, Christ Jesus, there is joy, peace and fellowship–for God is there and all His redeemed family are shut in with Him! Happy man, to be enclosed in the secret place of the Tabernacle of the Most High! He shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Next, notice that Noah's happiness was all the greater because he was shut in the ark with all his family. This is a great joy, to have all your household brought unto the faith of Christ. Some among us have one or two of their family still without Christ and strangers to His salvation. This is a great grief. I will not enlarge upon a subject so painful, but I know instances in which godly women have all their children with them in Christ, but the husband is still a stranger to the Covenant of promise. There is a Brother among us who joys to dwell in Christ, but his father and mother are still without God and without Christ! How often have we heard that dear Brother's prayer for his relatives! Perhaps his parents are here and, if so, I would tell them how much their son's prayers affect me. He cries

as for his very life that God would save his father! Some among us never pray in the Prayer Meeting without strong crying and tears for their kinsothers of their house–I hope they never will! I hope God will lay their kindred on their heart as a heavy burden till they are all saved in answer to prayer!

Noah would have been an unhappy man that day if his wife had been outside the ark, or if Shem or Ham had been outside, or if Japhet's wife, or any other had been left to perish. How joyful are they who can say that all theirs are God's. You are very pleased, some of you, to see your sons and daughters respectably settled in life. Thank God for His gracious Providence, but, mark you, if they were all poor and you saw them all saved–that would be the highest cause for gratitude! Better to see them regenerate than rich! Better married to Christ than to a fortune! Give your God no rest till it is so and if there is one who seems quite outside of spiritual things, pray for him as Abraham prayed for Ishmael, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!" It is better you should pray hard for them while they live, than that you should mourn bitterly over them when dead, as David did when he lamented aloud, "O Absalom, my son! Would God I had died for you! O Absalom, my son, my son!" May the Lord, when He blesses us as He did Jacob, extend that blessing to all our tribes and cause all that are born unto us to be born again unto Himself.

Noah and his household were shut in, dear Friends, to be perfectly preserved, and then to come forth into a new world. The rains descended, the springs poured forth their fountains, the waters rose and the huge vessel began to leave the ground and to walk the waters like a thing of life. I think the little company might well have sung a hymn, but if they did, it is probable that the hymn was brought to a pause as they heard the cries of drowning men and women outside. I cannot attempt to picture the scene–they must have come clustering in great multitudes round the ark when they saw that in very deed the flood was descending and rising! As the fast-closed ark began to move, the inmates must have heard a chorus of cries, groans and shrieks of men and women as they perished in the insatiable waters!

Down poured the incessant showers, beating on the roof with perpetual thunder. The bidden eight were in solitude, shut in from the all-enveloping sheet of rain. The waters continued to gather and still the ark rose. Though they could scarcely tell where they were amid the watery solitude, they knew that they were safe. When they looked out and saw no living thing, not even the top of a mountain, and they were floating on a sea that knew no shore, how strange must have been their sensations! But the Lord had shut Noah in, so he was perfectly safe. Noah knew that the Lord High Admiral of the seas was at the helm to steer the lonely ship aright. Then came a strong wind to evaporate the waters and how the ark must have

sped before the gale, none knew where! It was tossed about, doubtless, for it is the nature of winds to raise waves–and where there was no shore to give the slightest shelter, the vessel must have felt all their force. Yet the favored family was safe–

"Without deep calls unto deep,

But all is peace within."

The waters subsided and, by-and-by, the ark came to a strange sensation, for its keel was touching the earth–it was coming to its rest. God remembered Noah and brought the ark to rest on the mountains of Ararat. But will the ark ground safely? Perhaps she will break her back on a rock, or slide down the side of a hill, or over the brink of a precipice! No, no. He who was her Architect will be her Preserver! God has found an anchorage for the stars and He can surely berth a ship! He found the ark a safe resting place and brought out all her passengers safe and sound. He is berthing many a vessel, now, in the everlasting harbors, and He has such skill in navigation that no vessel which belongs to Him shall ever come to an ill end! So far, Noah fared well and felt solid ground beneath him once again. Now the waters quickly disappear, but what a mass of mud–shall the rescued family run the risk of fever and pollution? They shall not be let out till the land is dry–when the earth has been fertilized by its own destruction and is ready to receive the seed from the sower's hand–and the grass has begun to grow for the cattle!

Then shall they come out into a new world. How fair the face of Nature so newly washed! How like a bride decked for her marriage day! God sets open wide the door and out they come–camels, elephants, sheep, lions–Noah and all his family rejoicing to range at liberty! A sacrifice is offered and God smells a savor of rest. So shall it be with us–shut in with Christ away from this world to which we are not conformed–we shall ride in safety as exiled beings out of this old world into another! A day comes when the new Heaven and the new earth shall be seen and then the meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace! Then shall our sacrifice of praise be accepted of the Lord!

Blessed are they who enter into the ark of Jesus Christ and so die to the old life that they may live in newness of life, rejoicing in Him who sits upon the Throne of God and says, "Behold, I make all things new!" This is your lot and mine forever and ever!

II. I have purposely reserved only a very few minutes for the second and much more painful point of my discourse, which comes out of the words, SHUT OUT. To have the door shut is well enough for Noah and those who are with him, but as for all the rest, that big door, when it closed on its hinges, shut them all out! Shut them all out to perish with a swift and sure destruction! Who were they? I wonder if any of the sort are here! Well, they were a people that had been preached to–Noah was a "preacher of righteousness"–and fulfilled his office perseveringly. The men of his generation were

not left to perish without the Light of God–they had been warned, they had been instructed, they had been entreated.

They were such as you are who have been habitual hearers of the Word of God, but hearers only. Of course, you have, none of you, heard the Gospel for 120 years from one man, but many of you have heard it quite long enough to have incurred great guilt in having rejected it so often. They were a people who had been prayed for. You will ask me how I come to know that. I answer that Ezekiel speaks of three men notable as intercessors, Noah, Daniel and Job–and I feel sure he would not have mentioned Noah in that company if he had not been a man of great prayer. I believe that Noah prayed much for his generation and yet they were not saved. I am sure, dear Hearers, that some of you are daily the object of earnest supplication.

On Monday nights I have had notes about some of you, and hundreds, and even thousands of us have joined together in praying for you! Beside that, you know the dear ones at home are earnestly interceding for you and some who are now in Heaven pleaded hard for you before they departed. Yet you will be shut out as sure as you are alive unless you flee to Christ and enter into His salvation very soon. They were a people who had, many of them, been associated with Noah in his work. It is hardly likely that Noah built the ark with his own hands all alone–he must have hired fellers of trees and carpenters, caulkers and shipwrights of various kinds.

None of these were saved. It is a sad thing that those who helped to build the ark were shut out of it!

Remember, however, that they shut themselves out! They chose their own destruction. Do I speak to any who have subscribed to build the house in which they worship? Who contribute their share to the expenses of the Church and to the help of the poor and to the education of the young–and yet have no part in Christ? I do not understand those of you who are zealous in promoting religion and yet have no share in the great salvation! Why will you resolve to be shut out? As sure as ever you sit on that seat, you will be shut out of Heaven and shut out of Christ forever unless you arise and go unto your Father confessing your sins and seeking His mercy! May God awaken you to flee from the wrath to come!

These people in Noah's time had seen great wonders. Half the world must have gathered to see the camels and elephants, eagles and peacocks, snails and worms–all come running, or flying, or creeping to the ark! Such a sight never could have been seen before! There they come in pairs–four wild beasts, two and two–and clean beasts by sevens! Voluntarily entering the ark! What a sight it must have been! Many saw it and confessed that God's hand was in it and yet they did not enter the ark, themselves. Oh, my Hearers, some of you have been here in times of revival! You have seen drunks saved! You have seen the most unlikely ones converted and yet you have not turned unto the Lord! Be you sure

of this–you will be shut out of hope forever! May God grant it may never be so! But unless you repent, it will be the case.

Let me read you a passage from the Gospel of Luke. And as I read it, think of it and tremble–"When once the master of the house is risen up and has shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us! He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not from where you are–then shall you begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Your Presence, and You have taught in our streets. But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not from where you are! Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." Thrust out–pushed out, not permitted to enter the great door interposing between you and all hope of mercy!

Next, notice what they did. What they did was this–they were a people who took all their delight in worldly things. We are told in the New Testament that they "ate and they drank, they married and were given in marriage, till the day that Noah entered into the ark." They were altogether taken up with this world–like some of you who have no regard for the world to come–but live as if this life would be everything. Prayer, praise and looking into eternal things are all a weariness to you–you look after the shop and the farm and the house–and forget God. I do not blame you for diligence in

business any more than I blame these people for eating and drinking and marrying! But to make this the main thing in life is to despise God and Heaven and eternity! O my Hearer, remember your God! Remember your Savior! Remember your soul! Remember death! Heaven! Hell! How little do you think of these thing! Be not like these ungodly ones who gave their hearts to worldly things!

And then they did not believe. That was the point. Whatever Noah might say they replied, “Poor old man, you have entered on a second childhood. Perhaps when we are 500 years old, we shall talk nonsense, too.” When the Patriarch came to be 600 years old, they said, “That greybeard is always telling us these stories,” and they jested at the old man’s fable. Alas, some of you do not believe the Gospel and, therefore, do not seek its salvation! But it is true and you will acknowledge it to be so when you get breast deep in the fire-flood, as you will be before long! Oh that you would believe and escape from the wrath to come!

They despised the long-suffering of God! They said, “Here has Noah been telling us these 120 years that a flood is coming and where is it?” Among ourselves it is a common proverb, “Christmas is coming,” but in Noah’s days there must have been more sting in the proverb, “The deluge is coming.” They would not believe that such a thing could ever be. Some say, “I have gone on very well. I have had no religion and yet I have always prospered. I have seen

godly people getting poor, but I have always added field to field and house to house. I do not need religion. I am comfortable enough without it." If we say we pity them, they reply, "We do not want your pity." Just so! But the tables will be turned before long and then you will demand our pity, though it will avail you nothing, for the door will be shut!

Once let God shut the door and there will be an eternal separation between the ungodly and all hope and happiness. What came of it, then? The door of hope was shut and the multitude perished without hope! When I was thinking this over I fancied that I could preach about it, but I cannot. When I realize the fact that any one of my dear hearers could be shut out of Heaven I cannot bear it! I need to find a secret place to weep. If an angel should say to me, this morning, "All your hearers shall be saved but one and you must pick out the one who shall be shut out of Heaven," I should run my eyes anxiously up and down these lines of pews–and I should take up many an hour and at last cry–"No, I cannot take the responsibility of marking out the doomed man!"

I would keep you here, I think, till I died, before I could make the horrible death-choice. I would say, "Lord, save everyone." And as for the marked man, I would cry, "Spare him! Do spare him!" Oh, my Hearers, will you do for yourselves what I could not dare to do for you? Will any man choose for himself to be lost? Will he count himself unworthy of eternal life and take it from himself? Then I

must shake off the dust of my feet against him! I will have none of the responsibility! If you will be damned, you must do it yourselves! I will not be a partaker in the crime. Your blood be on your own heads! Go down to the Pit if you will deliberately choose to do so, but know this, that Christ was preached to you and you would not have Him! You were invited to come to Him, but turned your backs upon Him! You chose for yourselves your own eternal destruction! God grant you may repent of such a choice, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Ge 8:9 • The Dove's Return to the Ark

SERMON 0637

T*he Dove's Return To The Ark*

"But the dove found no rest for the soles of her feet and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. Then he put forth his hand and took her and pulled her in unto him into the ark."

Genesis 8:9

THE sending forth of the raven and of the dove have furnished ready materials for numerous allegories with which Divines in different ages have sometimes edified and more frequently amused their hearers. We cannot afford time to mention many of them, but one of the host may serve as a specimen. Certain expositors have fancied that the mission of the raven prefigured the sending forth of

the Law, which was black and terrible and which came not back to man bearing any token of comfort, or sign of hope. And that afterwards the Lord sent forth the Gospel, foreshadowed by the dove, which by-and-by came back to sinful man, bearing the olive branch of peace.

Thus they illustrated the great Truth of God that there is no peace in the terms of the Law, for that raven can only croak hoarsely and fiercely. But there is peace in the ground of the Gospel, for the dove bears the olive branch in her mouth. Such far-fetched allegories as these, at the time when they were contrived and carried out, may have had their value and have been instructive to an undiscerning age. It is not, however, to be regretted that the Church of today has far less taste for such childish things.

We are quite as willing as any men to see allegories where they are really clear, for we remember the words of Paul concerning Hagar and Sarah, "which things are an allegory," but we are not ready to follow the quaint and strange inventions of spiritualists whether ancient or modern. The clue must be evident or we had rather not enter the labyrinth. There is one adaptation of the incident before us which seems so naturally to suggest itself that I can not help using it this morning. The dove may well picture the Believer's soul. That soul sometimes flies abroad to and fro and takes a survey of all things–but it finds no rest for the soles of its feet anywhere except in Christ Jesus. And, therefore, however long

in flight, it is sure, eventually, to return to its own proper resting place.

The child of God can never be content out of his God–he who has once had Christ in him, the hope of Glory, can never be satisfied to rest or glory except in the Lord Jesus. Let us, this morning, carry out that one thought and look at it in the various lights which this picture of the dove may throw upon it.

First, LET US LOOK AT THE DOVE SETTING OUT UPON HER VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY. She has been perfectly safe in the ark. Other fowls have perished–cattle and creeping things have all been destroyed by the flood–but this dove, with other favored ones, has been happily secured. She has wanted for nothing–for the God who put her into the ark has taken care of her there and that righteous man who was made the means of her rescue has constantly provided her with her daily food.

She has nestled in the ark and been happy and comfortable there and yet she is about to stretch her wings and fly away from the boat of safety. Why does she act thus? Well may we ask this question of ourselves–we have been saved in Christ Jesus, many of us–saved when the floods of sin covered the rest of our kinsfolk–saved when our doubts and fears threatened eternal ruin to us! We have been provided for in Christ Jesus and housed in His salvation. He has been no wilderness to us–we have found enduring rest and

seasonable provision in Him. How is it, then, that we can stretch our wings to fly, or even open our eyes to look abroad?

My Soul, is there not enough in Christ? Why will you seek elsewhere? Why leave the Fountain for the broken cisterns? Will a man leave the fertile fields for a barren rock, or forsake the running waters for pestilential pools? Remember the mischief that Dinah gained unto herself when she left her father's house to go to the tents of Shechem. Think how Why do you go abroad where all is empty and void and waste? Yet we must all confess that these hearts of ours are apt to bear us away from Christ and these minds of ours are prone to forget Him and to look abroad after some other love.

But why did the dove fly away? I answer first–a very simple answer to give, you will say–because she had wings. A creature with wings feels within itself a natural instinct to fly and, having been in the ark so long where she had little space for flight, I daresay her liberty at first was very sweet to her. What are these pinions for–why are they covered with silver and the feathers there with yellow gold, if I may not clip through yonder cloud and cleave these earth-mists and see what there is to be seen?

And, therefore, because she has wings she flies. And so it is with us. Our soul has many thoughts and many powers which make the spirit restless. If we were without imagination we might be content with the few plain truths which we have so well known and proved.

But having an imagination we are often dazzled by it and we want to know whether certain things which look like solid verities really are. If we had no reason, but could abide entirely in a state of pure and simple faith, we might not be exposed to much of the restlessness which now afflicts us.

But reason will draw conclusions, ask questions, suggest problems, raise enquiries and vex us with difficulties. Therefore, because our souls are moved by so vast a variety of thoughts and possess so many powers which are all restless and active, it is readily to be understood that while we are here in our imperfect state our spirits should be tempted to excursions of research and voyages of discovery, as though we sought after some other object of love besides the One who still is dearer to us than all the world besides.

Possibly there was another reason. This dove was once lodged in a dovecote. When children we saw men throwing up carrier pigeons into the air laden with missives and we foolishly wondered how the dove knew the way to go with the letter, dreaming as we did that it flew with it wherever the person chose to direct the envelope. We soon learned the secret. The dove bears the letter to her own dovecote–she will go nowhere else with it–and it is not in the wit of man to make the dove fly in any other direction than towards its own home. The dove is thrown up into the air. She mounts aloft, whirls round and round and round, looking with

eager eyes. At last she sees the place where she has been known to rest and where her little ones have been reared and she darts straight to the spot.

Before the ark was built, no doubt, this bird frequented much a chosen spot where it had built its nest and reared its young ones and its heart went towards it. Though it had been in the ark so long, it had not forgotten the past. And therefore no sooner has it liberty than it seeks to fly in the direction of its own dovecote, although that cote had been swept away forever.

Ah, and you and I, before we knew the Savior, we had a rest. Before we had experienced the sweetness of His love we found joy in sin. We built our nest and we thought in our heart that we should never be moved. We were satisfied once, after a fashion, with the vanities of this present world. We had our loves, our joys, our pleasures, our delights. And that carnal old nature within us is not dead! When it gets its liberty it is sure to look out for its old haunts. Have you not, even when singing God’s praise, remembered a snatch of an old, perhaps lascivious song? Have not you frequently, when in the service of God, had brought to your recollection a dark scene of sin in which you had a share? And though you have loathed it with the new nature, yet has not the old nature tended towards it?

And has not that base heart within–which will not die until flesh becomes worms' meat–whispered to you to go back to the fleshpots

of Egypt and once more to partake of the garlic and leeks and onions which were so sweet in the house of bondage? Yes, the dovecote still has its attraction. The best of men have still within them the seeds of those sins which make the worst of men so vile. The old serpent still creeps along the heart which has become a garden of the Lord. Our gold is mixed with dross. Our sky bears many a cloud and the clearest river of humanity still has mire at the bottom.

I marvel not that the dove flew away from the ark when she remembered her dovecote. And I do not wonder that at seasons the old remembrances get the upper hand with our spirit and we forget the Lord we love and have a hankering after sin. Yet it would not be fair to forget that this dove was sent out by Noah–so that whatever may have been the particular motives which ruled the creature, there was a higher motive which ruled Noah who sent her out.

Even so there are times when the Lord permits His people to endure temptation. What does this passage mean concerning the Savior–"After He was baptized, He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil"? What? Led of the Spirit? Where will the Spirit lead Him? Will not the Spirit lead Him to His Father's temple that He may join in its hallowed exercises? Will He not lead Him to the mountain where He may proclaim glad tidings to the people? No. The Spirit led Him into the wilderness "to be

tempted of the devil." We are taught to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." And very stupid people have tried to alter the petition into, "Leave us not in temptation."

The Savior never said that. It would be a very proper prayer, but it is not what He said. His words are, "Lead us not into temptation." It appears, then, that sometimes God may allow His people to be led into temptation, or otherwise we need not say, "Lead us not into temptation." Such temptation produces excellent results in being overruled by Divine Grace for the lasting benefit of the Lord's people. The dove would love the ark far better than before, after taking its dreary flight above the watery waste. She would nestle more peacefully than ever in Noah's hands after having seen and known how impossible it was to find rest for the soles of her feet anywhere else!

Thus the Lord permits His people to gad abroad in their thoughts and to go flying about in their minds that their after repose may be sweeter and more enduring. He takes away from them the light of His Countenance and familiar fellowship with Himself that the darkness may make them prize the sun. They fly from vanity to vanity learning the emptiness of all and then they cling to their own real bliss–their God and Father in Christ Jesus! And throughout life they have to bless God for that dark and bitter experience which yielded so good and comfortable a fruit that it compelled them to

know that there was none upon earth for them but Christ and none even in Heaven to fill their souls but their Lord Jesus.

So when I see the Christian taking wing in his thought away from the ark, I will be grieved to see him in the temptation, but I will pray the Lord to overrule it that he may come back again and say, "Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." Beloved, it is a bitter but a precious lesson to learn, that all is nothing out of Christ and that Jesus alone can give us rest. May you all learn it thoroughly and learn it soon.

II. Now MARK THE DOVE AS SHE FINDS NO REST. She has plumed her wings and she hurries in her search after a home. The mountain tops, I think, according to the preceding verses were just visible, but this was all. She flies over them and between them, as they rise like islands in the midst of that vast shoreless sea. At last she tires–even the dove cannot fly forever. She needs to rest. Where shall she end her flight? The raven yonder is comfortable enough gorging himself upon the carcass of a huge beast which was floating by. The dove, however, cannot rest there–her nature loathes putridity and she flies away from the reeking mass.

Yonder is a tree–one of the mighty monarchs of the forest has been broken off in the great tempest which drowned the world and is now floating high with branches lifted up like the masts of a vessel. She tries to light upon it but it is covered with thick mire and filth. The wet and slime suit her not and she takes to her wings

again. Further off another object attracts her and she speeds to it as well as her weary wings can carry her. But there is nothing there for her to rest upon.

She turns east, north, south, but her wings grow weary for she can find no place where to rest the soles of her feet. As we observe her flapping her wings so languidly, I think we have a picture of a Christian in pursuit of an earthly object on which he would desire to set his heart. Forgetting that here we have no continuing city, the pilgrims of God at times wander in the wilderness hoping to find a settled habitation there. But their desolate hearts are soon faint within them, for there is no rest for their feet on earth. The Savior very beautifully said, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

What kind of rest did the Savior mean to give? I take it that He meant rest to all the powers of manhood. The intellect seeks after rest and by nature seeks it apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. Men of fine education, men of great mental powers are apt, even when converted, to look upon the simplicities of the Cross of Christ–I may not say with disesteem–but still with an eye too little reverent and loving. They are snared in the net in which the Grecians were taken–they have a hankering to mix philosophy with Revelation. The temptation is with a man of refined thought and high education to go away from the simple Truth of Christ Crucified and to invent a more complicated, as the term is, a more intellectual doctrine.

This it was which led the early Christian Church into Gnosticism and bewitched them with all sorts of heresies. This is the root of Neology and the other fine things which in days gone by were so fashionable in Germany and are now so ensnaring to certain classes of Divines. Brethren, I care not who you are nor what your education may be–if you are the Lord's people you will find no rest in the teachings of philosophy–or philosophizing divinity. You may receive this dogma of one great thinker, or that of another profound reasoner–but what the chaff is to the wheat–that will these be to the sure Word of God! All that reason, when best guided, can find out, is but the ABCs of the Truth of God and even that lacks sureness and certainty–while in Christ Jesus there is treasured up all the fullness of wisdom and knowledge!

All attempts on the part of Christians to be content with systems such as Unitarian and Broad Church thinkers would approve of must fail! True heirs of Heaven must come back to the grandly simple reality which makes the plowboy's eyes flash with joy and gladdens the pious man's heart–"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Christ satisfies the most elevated intellect when He is believingly received. But apart from Him the mind of the regenerate discovers no rest.

The heart, too, wants satisfying. Every one of us needs an object to love. I suppose there can hardly live on earth a man so monstrously selfish that he can be perfectly wrapped up in himself

and care for no one. Some of the grossest villains who have ever defiled the name of manhood have had one point in which they could be touched. Their hearts have gone out after one dear object–it may be a little child, long dead–and yet the recollection of that little one sleeping beneath the turf has been a link to goodness.

Many a hardened man has remembered his mother and her name has touched his heart. We must love something, or someone. Man was not made to live alone and therefore no man lives unto himself. Our heart must flow like a river, or it corrupts like a stagnant pool. Some have great hearts and they require a great object on which to spend their love. They love fondly and firmly–too fondly and too firmly for earthly love. These are they who suffer from broken hearts. They have so much love that when they set it upon an unworthy object they reap a proportionate degree of misery and disappointment.

Now let me say solemnly that no heart of a child of God will ever be satisfied with any object or person short of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is room for wife and children, there is room for friend and acquaintance and all the more room in one's heart because Christ is there–but neither wife, nor children nor friends, nor kinsfolk can ever fill the Believer's heart. He must have Christ Jesus–there is no rest for him elsewhere. Do I address any Believer who has been making an idol? Have you set up any god in your

heart? Have you loved any creature so as to forget your Savior? Be it child, or husband, or friend, take heed of the sin of idolatry!

Ah, you cannot, you shall not find rest for the soles of your feet in the creature, however fair that creature may seem. God will break your idol before your eyes, or if He suffers that idol to stand, it shall remain to plague and curse you, for thus says the Lord, "Cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm." "Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted?" Give your hearts to the Lord Jesus and He will never disappoint you. Lean on Him with all your weight of affection, for He will never fail you. Come here, all you fond and doting, you lovers, and love with all the lavish wealth and fervent heat of your spirits! Kindle your hearts until, like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, they glow seven times hotter–here is a fuel with which you can maintain the flame forever!

You whose love is like the sea, too deep to fathom, come to the Savior and give Him all and He shall not waste a drop, for He deserves all you can give and He will give you back a love which, compared with yours, shall be as the ocean when compared with the dewdrop that twinkles on the bough. So there is rest for the heart in Christ Jesus, but nowhere else.

Man has also judgment. And judgment, when exercised upon things right or wrong, is called conscience–and the conscience is a very difficult thing to quiet when once disturbed. Conscience is like

a magnetic needle which if once turned aside from its pole will never cease trembling. You can never make it still until it is permitted to return to its proper place–

"In vain the trembling conscience seeks,
Some solid ground to rest upon.
With strong desire the spirit faints,
Till we apply to Christ alone."

We shall never be able to find lasting peace for conscience till we cast ourselves upon Christ Jesus!

The child of God may sometimes so forget himself as to endeavor to base his hopes upon his experiences, his feelings, his joys, or his repentances. He may try to assure himself that all is well between God and his own soul because of his graces or his good works. Now, Christian, you know, or you ought to know by past experience, that you will never enjoy lasting peace here. You must come to Christ as you did at first with nothing of your own and take Him to be your All in All. And if you do not do this your feet shall know no rest, for you shall fly wearily on till you shall drop with despair.

Christ Jesus in the preciousness of His besprinkled blood! Christ Jesus in the glory of His snow-white righteousness! Christ Jesus in the prevalence of His intercession! Christ Jesus in the power of His arm and the love of His heart must be the sole and solitary dependence of every heir of Heaven! And if you try to mix

anything else with Christ, then your conscience shall accuse and Satan shall find an echo in your heart when he rails at you–and what will you do then?

Let me say, dear Friends, that for the entire man–we cannot stop this morning to take all the different powers with which man is endowed–but taking the whole together there is nothing that can satisfy the entire man but the Lord's love and the Lord's own Self. Many saints have tried to anchor in other roadsteads, but all have failed. I believe Solomon was a saint. I know he was a sinner–I believe he was the biggest fool that ever lived. But I believe that he was also the wisest of men. He was, in fact, a mass of contradictions.

Now Solomon was permitted to make experiments for us all and to do for us what we must not dare to do for ourselves. Here is his testimony in his own words–"I said of laughter, It is mad. And of mirth, What does it? I sought in my heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting my heart with wisdom. And to lay hold on folly till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the Heaven all the days of their life. I made me great works. I built houses. I planted vineyards–I made gardens and orchards and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits. I made me pools of water, to water the wood that brings forth trees. I got me servants and maidens and had servants born in my house.

“Also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me. I gathered me also silver and gold and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces. I got men singers and women singers and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments and that of all sorts. So I was great and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. And whatever my eyes desired I kept not from them. I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor–and this was my portion of all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had worked and on the labor that I had labored to do–and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit and there was no profit under the sun.” “Vanity of vanity, all is vanity.”

What? The whole of it vanity? Is there nothing in all that wealth, Solomon? What? Nothing in that wide dominion of yours reaching from the river even to the sea? Nothing in Palmyra’s glorious seat? Nothing in the house of the forest of Lebanon? Do you see nothing from Dan to Beersheba when you have made brass to be like pebbles and gold and silver to be but as common dust of the land? In those sweet sounds that lull you to your rest, in all the music and dancing that delight you, is there nothing?

“Nothing,” he says, “but weariness of spirit.” This is his verdict when he has tried it all. To get hold of Christ, to have His love and to taste of union with Him–this, dear Brethren–this is everything!

You need not try any other form of life in order to see whether it is better than the Christian's. Let me assure you if you roam the world round and search from Britain to Japan you will see no sights like a sight of the Savior's face! And if you could have all the comforts of life, yet if you lost your Savior you would be wretched! But if you get Him, then should you rot in a dungeon you would find it a paradise! Should you live in obscurity, or die with famine, you would yet be satisfied with favor and full of the goodness of the Lord!

III. Let us spend a moment in considering WHY THE DOVE COULD FIND NO REST FOR THE SOLES OF HER FEET. Was there a want of will in the dove? Was she one of those discontented birds that will not rest anywhere? Nothing of the kind! She seems to have searched after rest, for otherwise it need not be recorded that she found none. There are certain people in this world who never will rest and they certainly do not deserve it. They always grumble. No matter what you do, or what you do not do, they grumble forevermore.

They grumble at the sun, and call him, as Thompson once did, "a rosy drunkard." They murmur at the moon, her light is too pale and sickly and variable. They murmur at death–it is a dreadful thing to lose one's friends. They murmur at life–everybody seems to die and be happy, they say, except themselves–they are condemned to live on. You never can please them. All things are either too hot or

too cold, too young or too old, too rough or too smooth, too high or too low. They have made up their minds that there is nothing on earth that will ever satisfy them. They have set up an ultra standard of what they want and the world does not yield it.

No grass is green enough for them. No milk that is ever given by cows is fit for them to drink. No wine that was ever pressed from grapes is rich enough for their taste. Upon all created things they use the only organ which seems to be of use to them, that is, their nose–and that they turn up! Such people as these will tell you that there is nothing on earth–nothing on earth. They have indigestion, their liver is out of order–and consequently there is nothing on earth–everything here below is mean and despicable.

Now when people talk like that you just measure their talk by the men and make small account of their utterances. These men are not talking from their judgment–they are merely talking under the influence of an absurd, half-mad feeling! But such is not the case with the Christian. I know a considerable number of Christians who are of a cheerful disposition and who would even, as worldlings, have been satisfied with very little. They are a kind of men, (I trust you have some of them for your friends), who are not often put out. They, on the other hand, always look at the bright side of everything and if there should be a something which is a little amiss, they take it as a variety and only say, "Well, this is a change," and so they make pleasure where others would find pain.

And yet these very people, when they are converted, will tell you that they are not satisfied out of Christ! Now their verdict is worth considering. The dove had a will to find rest for the soles of her feet but she could not. It is not from want of will that I am compelled to say I cannot find anything beneath these stars, nor within the compass of the skies that can satisfy my soul's desires. I must get my God and have Him to fill my large expectations or I shall not be content. I mention these things because people are apt to suppose that Christians are all a set of melancholy dyspeptics who put up with religion because there is nothing else that helps to make them to be so happily miserable and therefore they take to it as congenial with their melancholy disposition! But it is not so. We are a cheerful, genial race and yet for all that we are not resting the soles of our feet anywhere in earthly things.

Again, the reason why the dove could find no rest was not because she had no eyes to see. I know not how far a dove's eyes can discern, but it must be a very vast distance–perfectly incredible I should think. We see the dove sometimes mount aloft–we can see nothing and yet she perceives her dovecote and darts towards it. Now the Christian does not say there is no joy on earth for him except in his Lord because he has no power to see things pleasing and delightful. If there is melody in music, the Christian knows it, likes it, rejoices in it. If there is sweetness his palate is as good as

another man's. If there is anything to be found in wealth, or what the world calls pleasure, he can see it all–he is not blind!

I know many Christians who are as quick in apprehension, as refined in taste, and as ready to appreciate anything that is pleasurable as other men–and yet these are men who are not fanatics! They are not shut up to a narrow range of things, but their vision can take in the whole circle of sublunary delights. These are men who have not only seen but even tasted, yet bear their witness that like the dove they can find no rest for the soles of their feet.

Moreover, the reason why the dove found no rest was not because she had no wings to reach it. Her wings were strong and swift. She could fly as well as the raven–perhaps she could, in the long run, outstrip him. So the Christian has power to enter into the enjoyments of the world if he likes. It is not because his youth has departed and he has become old and shriveled and therefore the delights of the flesh have ceased to be temptations to him. No! Of course there are some in that condition, who when converted can almost be taunted by sinners with the remark that they have tried the world's pleasures and when they could not enjoy them they then turned away from them.

But some of us are young and strong and full of blood and our bones are full of marrow. And if we willed it we could be ringleaders in all sorts of pleasure and plunge head first into the stream of sensual delight. We lack not courage and we lack not

force and yet for all this–we say it solemnly and the God that searches all hearts knows we only say what we feel forced to say–that we can find no rest for the soles of our feet in earthly pleasures. We have tried. We have wished to rest. We have even wanted to be satisfied with the world–but the void within can never be filled out of the mines of earth. We cannot–God has made it all empty to us.

Now what was the reason, then? It was not want of will. It was not want of sight. Nor was it want of wings–what was it? The reason lay in this–she was a dove! If she had been a raven she would have found plenty of rest for the soles of her feet. It was her nature that made her restless. And the reason why the Christian cannot find satisfaction in worldly things is because there is a new nature within him that cannot rest. “Up! Up! Up!” cries the new heart! “What have you to do here?” “Come, strike your tents,” cries the new creature. “You have no continuing city here–how is it that you try to make one in this barren wilderness? Away with you! What are you doing?”

If I could transform myself to an unregenerate man, the world might content me. But if I am regenerate, it matters not into what society I may be thrown away, I never can, I never shall, I must not, I dare not hope for contentment–for to the regenerate, Christ alone is satisfaction–they cannot find it anywhere else. You see,

then, that this is a great test–this will try you, dear Friends, and divide you.

If any of you are saying, "Oh, I am satisfied enough. I do not want this Christ the man talks about–give me this and give me that and I shall be quite content." I say, "Very likely–so was the raven content with carrion. But and if you are a child of God, you may seek contentment elsewhere, but you shall be compelled, perhaps by sore and bitter trials, to turn away from all earthly things and fly back again to your ark."

IV. Being disappointed, WHAT DID THE DOVE DO? When she found there was no contentment elsewhere, what then? She flew back to the ark. Josephus tells us that the dove came back to Noah with her wings and feet all wet and muddy. I think it is very likely, but I do not think it any the more likely because Josephus says so. Some of you have grown wet and muddy. You have been trying to find rest in the world, Christian, and you have got mired with it. Trying to rest those feet where they could not rest you have collected filth.

What then? Shall I advise you to bathe in the flood? Shall I advise you to cleanse those wings till they are bright as they once were? No, I do not. I cannot give you any such advice. I can only say to you, "Do what the dove did." She mounted again–she caught sight of the ark and knew the place of safety. I want you once again to get a sight of Christ. Peter had gone far away, as the dove had

done–he had denied his Master with oaths and curses–and what brought him back? Why, it was the Lord getting a sight of Peter and Peter getting a sight of the Lord! "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter and he went out and wept bitterly."

Was it not all done as soon as the Lord's eyes and Peter's eyes came into contact? If you are enabled by the Holy Spirit to remember that there was a Savior who loved you so that Heaven could not hold Him. That He had to come to earth and enter into your degradation, and bear your sin, and suffer for your sake, you will be getting right at once, however far off you are! If you look to Jesus, there is life for you in a look at the Crucified One.

Then the dove, after looking, was not content with that–she began to speed with all her might back to the ark. So, when you have a faint view of your Savior and you are once more consciously saved, then fly back to Him! I do not read that the dove made a tour round about, or that she thought she would try something else. No, she took just the straightest line she could, the nearest way between herself and her loved abode and went right straight away to Noah. Fear may have made her wings heavy, but it did not stop them! Mire and mud may have made the journey more laborious, but it did not turn her aside!

Come you mired ones! Come you fainting ones, doves as you are! Though you think yourself to be black as the raven with the mire of sin–back, back to the Savior! Every moment you wait does but

increase your misery! Your attempts to plume yourself and make yourself fit for Him are all vanity. Come to Him just as you are! “Return you backsliding Israel.” He does not say, “ Return you repenting Israel,” (there is such an invitation, doubtless), but, “you backsliding one, as a backslider with all your backslidings about you. Return, return, return!”

I want you now to turn your eyes for a moment to THE VERY BEAUTIFUL SCENE, so it seems to me to be, at the end of her return journey. Noah has been looking out for his dove all day long. Here she comes! How heavily she flies! She will drop–she will never reach the ark. Here she comes and Noah is ready to receive her. She looks bespotted with mire and dirt, but Noah waits for her. She has just strength to get on to the edge of the ark–she can hardly hold on there and is ready to drop when Noah puts forth his hand and pulls her in unto him.

Mark that–“pulled her in unto him.” It seems to me to imply that she did not fly right in herself, but was too fearful, or too weary to get right in. She got as far as she could and then he put forth his hand and pulled her in unto him. Did you ever feel that blessed gracious pull, when your heart has been desiring to get near to Christ? Oh, it has been such tugging, such toiling in prayer–you could only say, “I would but cannot pray. My heart is heavy as lead and my soul as hard as adamant and dead as iron. I cannot stir

myself and get near to the Savior. Oh that I could! Oh that I had the wings of a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest."

All of a sudden it comes, that gracious pull! Your heart begins to be on fire! Before you are aware your soul seems to be like the chariots of Aminadab! Now it is all well with you! Now can you sing sweetly to your Beloved who has done great things for you and you are glad. All this was, you perceive, to the wandering dove, to the miry dove speckled with filth. Just as she was, she is pulled into the ark. So you, with all that sin of yours and those wanderings will be received. "Only return"–those are two gracious words in the Bible–"only return"–so it is put. What? Nothing else? No, only return.

She had no olive branch in her mouth this time. Nothing at all but just herself and her wanderings. But it is, "only return," and she does return and Noah pulls her in. Lord, pull me in! My thirsty spirit faints to reach You! My soul cries out for Your Presence but cannot reach You! I see You, Lord! Pull me in! When like Esther I faint in Your Presence and cannot tell You what I would, stretch out Your silver scepter–read my heart and grant my desire and show Yourself to me! Oh, open my eyes to see You and know You!

Thus much concerning the dove and its likeness to our own hearts. Now I close with these three things–First, this becomes first of all a test to you. We can divide the house into two parts by asking the question, "Are you satisfied out of Christ?" Are you

satisfied and content with anything short of a conscious knowledge of your union and interest in Christ Jesus? If so, you have no reason to believe that you are a converted man. If this world satisfies you I have no fault to find, no reason to be angry with you. Who finds fault with horses for being satisfied with hay and oats? It is their natural food.

Some persons are very indignant with others because they will go to theatres and gay assemblies. They only take what their nature craves after. The raven is now feeding on his carrion. I draw a distinction forevermore between that which men without Divine Grace may do and that which gracious men may do. The graceless man stands somewhat on the level of the beast that perishes. Well, let the swine have their husks! Let the swine, I say, have their provender. You will never make them any better by denying them their husks! You may excite their angry passions against you, that is all–let them have their husks.

But you, on the other hand, who are a Christian, are a different being. You are lifted into another state. You have another nature. Now, could you enjoy those things? If you really could find satisfaction in them, you are a hypocrite. If your soul really could stretch herself at rest and find the bed long enough and the coverlet broad enough to cover you in the chambers of sin, then you are a hypocrite and one of these days down to the pit your soul must go! On the other hand, if you feel sure and certain that if you could

indulge in sin without a punishment, it would still be a punishment of itself. And if you feel you could have the whole world and never be parted from it, it would be quite enough misery not to be parted from it–for your God–your God is what your soul craves after, then be of good courage! You are a child of God!

With all your sins and imperfections, take this to your comfort–if your soul has no rest in sin, you are not as the sinner is. If you are still crying after and craving after something better, Christ has not forgotten you for you have not quite forgotten Him. Here is a test, then. And then, secondly, we must use our text as an encouragement. Here we have an encouragement to backsliders to return like the dove. She did not find the ark shut against her–we do not even find there was any delay. Noah pulled her in at once. To the sinner here is encouragement, too. If you come back to the ark, you shall not be excluded. If any man shall be shut out of Heaven, he shuts the door himself. He who is damned signs his own death warrant. Our verse is true–

"None are excluded from now

But those who do themselves exclude."

If you come–sinner, drunkard, blasphemer, liar, thief–whoever you may be, it is written, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." "But here is one," I think I hear someone say, "here is one of such a sort as never came before! Blacker than night. More full of sin than the egg is full of meat! Now, now there is one that

will be shut out." I say make way for him, make way for him! Stand back you common sinners, make a way for him! Now we will see whether Christ is true or not! Brethren, what will be the result? Why we know that in Christ there is love and truth and faithfulness–and that what He says He means and that His promise He will perform.

When that black sinner comes, the Lord looks upon him with an eye of unutterable love and His first word is, "I have blotted out your iniquity as a cloud and like a thick cloud your transgression." "I have loved you with an everlasting love," and His next act is to plunge that sinner in the fountain filled with blood and suddenly he comes out whiter than snow, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing! He is able to cleanse from all iniquity and to deliver from all unrighteousness and to make the foulest and vilest bright as the sun at noonday! This is encouragement–God help you to take it! May the Holy Spirit bring you to Christ today.

And then, lastly, we use our text, I think, as a loud cry for gratitude. Does Christ receive us when we have found Him and is there none on earth like He? Is He the best of all the good, the fairest of all the lovely? Oh then, let us praise Him.! Down with your idols, up with the Lord Jesus! Now let the standard of all pomp and pride be trampled under foot, and let the Cross of Jesus, which the world frowns and scoffs at, be lifted up! Oh for a high

throne for the Savior! Let Him be lifted up forever and let my soul sit at His feet and kiss His feet and wash them with my tears.

Oh how precious is Christ! How can it be that I have thought so little of Him? How is it I can go abroad for anything else when He is so full, so rich, so satisfying? Christian, make a covenant with your heart and ask the Lord to ratify it–that you will never depart from Him! Bid Him set you as a signet upon His finger and as a bracelet upon His arm. Ask Him to bind you about Him as the bride decks herself with ornaments and as the bridegroom puts on his jewelry. I would live in Christ's heart–in the clefts of that Rock my soul would abide!

The sparrow has made a house and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young, even Your altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God! And so, too, would I make my nest, my home in You and never from You may the soul of Your turtle dove go forth again! May I nestle close to Jesus who has pulled me back into the ark after my backsliding. May the Holy Spirit so preserve us for His name's sake. Amen.

Ge 8:9 • The Weary Dove's Return

SERMON 2373

T*he Weary Dove's Return*

"But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot and she returned into the ark to him, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her, and drew her into the ark to himself."

Genesis 8:9

NOAH knew that God would, in due time, let him out of the ark. He was quite sure that the Lord had not put him into the ark to make a great coffin of it–that he and all those living creatures that went in with him should perish there. And, because he believed in God, he, therefore, removed the covering of the ark and looked abroad, expecting, by-andby, to see not only the tops of the

mountains, but also a dry and green earth once more. True faith often goes to the window. If your faith turns her face to the wall and expects nothing, I do not think it is genuine faith. Faith has eyes and, therefore, she looks afar off, and she often watches as the watchman of the night looks for the gray dawn of the morning. You remember the story of the child who went to a Prayer Meeting which was called together to pray for rain? She expected that God would send the rain, so she took her umbrella with her because she needed to get home dry. I wish that you and I had learned the same simple art of faith. Having prayed, and having believed, let us expect! Let us open the window and look out! God never failed an expectant people, yet, but a great many of His people fail to expect. And if you do not expect, you are not likely to receive! David said, "My soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." And when your expectation is from Him, it will not be disappointed. It is a great pity when we keep the shutters up so that we cannot look out of the window to see the dry land.

Next, because Noah expected the earth to be dry, he sent out the raven. And when the raven did not answer his purpose, he sent out the dove. After the dove came back with no tidings, he waited seven days and then sent her out again. And when she returned with only an olive leaf in her mouth, he waited seven more days and then sent her out again. Oh, dear Friends, often send out your doves! Be looking for blessings! You have asked for them–God has

promised to give them–send out your doves to see whether the blessings are not there! And if you do so constantly and perseveringly, verily, I say unto you, you shall have your reward!

Still, notice that Noah, when he had the best evidence that he could get that the earth was dry, did not dare to go out of the ark till God opened the door. So, gather all the information you possibly can about your position and act according to the rules of commonsense. But, after you have done that, still wait upon God! When you know from your ravens and your doves that the earth is getting dry, do not come out till He that shut the door opens it for you. Dear people of God, I wish that we had more of that old habit of looking to Providence! We have become so wise, nowadays, that we do not require the fiery-cloudy pillar! We run without Divine guidance, but, mark you, we often have to run back, again. We are guests at the table of Providence and if we will let God carve for us, our plate will always have plenty of food on it–but if we get to carving for ourselves, we shall cut our fingers–and not cut much else! And we shall have great cause to be ashamed that, instead of trusting God, we took to trusting ourselves! Do not trust your raven or your dove, trust your God! And if you go where He guides you, you will go the right way, even if it should be a rough way. And you will have to say, "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Now, to come a little closer to the text and to what we are about to say upon it. I do not know where the raven rested, whether he did, as some suppose, alight on the corpses floating on the flood, which I hardly think is likely, for God was preparing the earth for Noah to come back to it, and He would not leave it strewn with carcasses, as some have imagined. Whether the raven returned to the ark, but refused to come in, or whether it found a resting place on the slimy boughs of trees, or on the tops of the mountains, which we are told began to be visible, I cannot tell. This, I do know, that, wherever the raven rested, the dove could not do so–there was no clean place fit for the dove's clean nature. So it had to return to the ark and when, weak and weary, it could hardly reach the ark, being heavy with the damp, perhaps mired with the filthy water into which it may have fallen in its weariness–while just able to get as far as the ark–it might have perished in the waters had not Noah perceived his little bird coming to the window. I suppose he was already there looking out for her and he stretched forth his hand, and caught her, and pulled her in, and she was safe in the ark again.

There are three lessons which I am going to try to teach you from this simple little incident.

The first is, that THUS GOD RECEIVES HIS SERVANTS. He receives them unto Himself, just as Noah received this dove into the ark.

Upon this I remark, first, that sometimes God's servants wander. How I wish that they never did! Oh, that we so loved our Noah that we never left Him and never went away from Him who is our Rest! We are tempted and the flesh is frail. Oh, how sadly have some good men wandered! We speak this to our shame. We make no excuse for ourselves. We have wandered like silly doves–we have left the place of peace and safety and joy–and we have gone abroad, flying, we know not where! Perhaps I speak to some such at this time.

Now, if you are one of Christ's doves, you will never rest till you go back to Him. Time was when you could have found pleasure in the ways of sin, but you cannot do so now. You may try to find it, but you cannot. When you were a raven, you might have done so, but now that the Holy Spirit has made a dove of you, you are spoilt for the raven's ways. When a true child of God wanders into sin at any time, and goes back to the old haunts, he thinks to himself, "I used to enjoy myself in this place of amusement. I used to make merry with such and such company. The pipe and the bowl were once like Heaven on earth to me. But now," he says, "I do not know how it is, but these things seem so vapid, so empty. There is not the life, there is not the vivacity about them that I knew in my younger days. It seems to be all a more hollow sham, now." Ah, my Friend, it is not these things that have altered–it is you that the Grace of God has changed! If God means you to live in Heaven,

you shall never find your Heaven in this world! If He has chosen you to be His, and means you to be His, and has put His Spirit within you, you must be always restless till you come back and find rest in Him.

"May I come back?" says one. May you come back? Your Noah is at the window waiting for you! Speed towards Him with both your wings! Rest not till He puts forth His hand to you and grasps you, and draws you into Himself. "But will He have me? Will He have me again?" O bird of the weary wing, He is not weary of you! O bird of the wet wing that has been soiled in the filthy flood, He will not reject you! He washed you once–He will wash you again! He waits to be gracious! Jesus loves to receive backsliders. It is the joy of His heart, not only to make a sheep out of a goat, but to find one of His sheep that has gone astray! Not only to adopt a stranger into His family, but to restore the prodigal son! That is the meaning of that parable–it is the backslider's parable. Oh, that you would understand it and know that the infinite mercy of God is as ready to receive a returning backslider as Noah was to receive his wandering dove!

Now I will turn to another point. The dove in this narrative was not to blame, for it had not gone astray, but Noah sent it out and, every now and then, the Lord Jesus sends a dove of His to go and spy out the world. It is a business upon which we must go if He sends us. Now, what is our report of the world? Our report is that

there is nothing in the world upon which we can rest the sole of our foot. The world is said to be progressing, advancing, improving, but we cannot discover it. The same sin, the same filthiness, the same universally abounding unbelief that our fathers complained of, we are obliged to complain of still! And we are weary with the world, weary with the 19 th Century and all its boasted civilization. There is nothing upon which the sole of our foot can rest.

"What of the Church?" asks one. Well, look at the Church, too. There is nothing to rest on. There is much for which to be thankful, but there is nothing that can content a spirit that seeks after the Truth of God and holiness. I speak what I know, for with weary wings have I fled across the waters, and with anxious eyes have I scanned the horizon, but there is no place of rest for the sole of my foot! What then? What then? Is the servant of God weary with his flight? See what Noah did to the dove, for this is what the Lord will do to His servant–"he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark." O dear child of God, if you cannot rest in the Church, you can rest in Christ! If you cannot rest in the world, you can rest in the Lord! "He pulled her in unto him." It is a delicious sensation to get away from all men and all things to Christ, Himself. He never seems so sweet as when all else is bitter! He never appears so substantial as when all else melts before you. "He pulled her in unto him." She had done her work; she had taken her flight; she had made her investigation. Now she has come back

and she is in his bosom. “He pulled her in unto him.” May that be the portion of all my dear friends in Christ who at this time feel heavy about the signs of the times! May the Lord draw you into nearer, dearer, sweeter fellowship with Himself than you have ever enjoyed before, and this will be your best reward!

Again, to give another case, the Lord’s servants are sometimes sent forth that they may bring something back with them. You Sunday school teachers go out on the Sabbath hoping to bring some child back with you. You streetpreachers (and may your number be multiplied!) are trying to bring something or somebody to Jesus! Workers of different sorts who are here, tonight, you go flying abroad to try to find someone for Jesus. It may be that you have not picked up even an olive leaf, yet–not one “son of peace” has, at present, received your benediction. Well, this dove was welcome though she brought nothing back. She came back with nothing in her mouth the first time, but then we read, “Noah put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.”

What, though no child is saved as yet? What, though no hearer in the street has responded to the invitation of love? What, though you have labored in vain and spent your strength for nothing? You are accepted of your God if you have done your best, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit and, tonight He pulls you in unto Himself. If you are weary, O Martha, come and sit with Mary! If you are encumbered with the serving, come and be refreshed with the

communing! After all, you can, perhaps, glorify your Lord more by receiving than by giving. You shall find it more blessed to yourself to receive Christ than if you could bring a soul to Him–He can make it to be so if He pleases. At any rate, your hope of going out, again, and bringing in an olive leaf, by-and-by, will lie in your coming in, now, and getting in unto your Noah and resting on Him until He sends you out again!

Only one more observation will I make on this first point and it shall be a very brief one. As far as I can see, this dove was sent out in the morning and she came back in the evening–and Noah pulled her in unto him. Brothers, let that be a picture of every day in your lives. When you wake in the morning, perhaps the factory bell is ringing. At any rate, it is time for you to be off to business. You must think about your business. Perhaps yours is a work that is mental. You must give your mind to it, so all day long you feel like the dove flying abroad. Well, take good heed that when the sun goes down, you make your way back home to your Lord! Lock up your heart every morning before you go out and give Christ the key to keep till you come home. And then, when He opens it at night, the sweet perfume that you had in the morning will be there in the evening! It is best if we can keep up our thoughts of Christ all day long, but perhaps we cannot–then let the dove, that flew away in the morning, be sure to fly back at night! It is where you go when the day's toil is done that tells what sort of a man you are!

I think I have, before now, used the simile of the crows. You cannot tell where the crows live early in the morning–they are out on the land following the plow. Farther on in the day they are inspecting a field of turnips, perhaps, watching to see if they can find a fly or a worm. Where do they live? Wait until the evening, when they get together, and then you will see that they make a straight line for those tall trees where their nests are! Where do your thoughts go at night? Where do they go when your day's toil is done? When you have done with the business of the day, which is like the crows picking up the worms, which way do you go? That shows where your soul lives, so take care that in the evening you make your way back to your Noah. Oh, how sweetly does Christ come to us in our evening prayer and put out His hand and pull us in unto Himself–and we rest once more–

"As in the embraces of our God,

Or on our Savior's breast."

Thus have I spoken to you upon my first division, showing that God receives His servants as Noah received the dove.

II. I will now go on to the second part of my subject which is equally practical and will be useful to another class of people. THIS IS WHAT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST DOES TO SINNERS. I have spoken, first, of His servants. Now I want to speak of sinners who are seeking His face.

Note, then, that the Lord Jesus Christ does not despise the condition of the sinner who comes to Him. I have imagined that this dove might have fouled its wings. Certainly it was not the beauty that it was when Noah sent it out in the morning–but he did not, therefore, refuse to take it into the ark. It was very weary and ready to drop into the waters, yet Noah did not refuse it, but there he stood, at the open window, to meet it when it came! And you feel very foul, very unworthy, very unfit, and very unsafe–nevertheless, Jesus Christ will not refuse you! Whatever your condition may be, He casts out none who come to Him. Come as you are! Come even though you feel that you cannot come! Come anyway, for He will not reject you.

The first thing that Noah did with this dove was to display his power–"He put forth his hand." I have known the Lord display His power very remarkably when poor souls have been coming to Him, putting forth His hand, sometimes in Providence, doing some extraordinary thing to bring them to decision. Sometimes He has used a sermon, or a stray word from some gracious soul, or He has put forth the power of His hand in the preaching of His Word. Sometimes He has used a religious book, or a little tract as His agent. It has not mattered what the instrumentality has been, it is the power which God has put forth which has been the means of laying hold upon the coming sinner! Sometimes there has been no book and no sermon, but the Holy Spirit, without any apparent

means, has made an impression upon the conscience and upon the heart. There has come over the sinner, when he has begun to seek the Lord, a singular melting power, a feeling of solemnity such as he never had before. He cannot understand it. He seems to be on the borders of a new world. He hears the chimes of bells which he never heard before, ringing out of invisible places, and summoning him to his God! I know what this experience means and I pray that some of you may know it–that just now, at this very moment–our blessed Noah may put forth His hand to you poor fluttering doves! You cannot do anything, but Jesus can! You cannot save yourselves, but He can save you, even as Noah put forth his hand and saved the dove from perishing.

Then we read, next, that Noah took the dove, seized her, captured her, held her. That is what my Lord does. Jesus takes hold of sinners. Oh, that He might get a blessed hold of some of you, tonight! I have sometimes thought that Noah stood something like this [leaning forward, with hands outstretched,] looking out of the window, and when the dove came back and was ready to drop, he caught her between his hands, as one would tenderly hold a dove, encompassing her, and then he pulled her in unto him. What a blessing it is when the Gospel of Christ seems to surround you and you get a hand beneath you, and a hand above you, and you feel as if Christ had laid hold of you and was leading you joyfully captive! Some of you remember when that happened to you–when the hand

of Jesus was first held out, and then was put round about you–and you were taken prisoner and held in gracious bondage to the love and power of Christ!

Then we read that, "He pulled her in," and thus Jesus draws in sinners. There is something of a pull needed. Oh, what blessed pulls the Lord sometimes gives to bring sinners to decision and put an end to their hesitancy! They want to wait a little longer, but the Lord Jesus will not have it! Providence and Grace end their delays. They are very fearful, fluttering like this dove, afraid of her best friend, but the Lord Jesus Christ gives a pull that ends their fears and kills their despair. They are His and His powerful love wins the day! Sometimes, it is ignorance that keeps sinners back from Christ, for God's doves are often very silly creatures. They do not know the way into the ark. They miss the window. But Jesus does with them as Noah did with the dove–"He pulled her in." I hope I am not talking beyond the experience of many of you, or, if I am, I pray my Master to make this to be your experience even now. May these poor simple words of mine induce some of you to come to Christ at once! Why will you perish? Why will you delay? Why not be pulled in tonight, even as the dove was pulled in by Noah? I cannot pull you in. I would if I could, but Jesus can! And He cannot be less willing to bless you than I am!

Notice where Christ draws sinners. Noah pulled the dove in unto himself and that is what Christ does with His poor fluttering doves!

He draws them to Himself. You say that you need a lot of things. No you do not–you only need Jesus. If you have Him, you have everything! You need to be pulled into peace, to joy, to holiness, to rest. Yes, but what you really need is to be pulled into Jesus and you will get all the other blessings! Drawn to His wounds, poor doves, you shall find your hiding place! Drawn to His wounds, poor doves, you shall find the truest cleansing! This is what your Master must do for you, even as Noah pulled the dove in unto himself.

And when he had pulled her into himself, then she was in the ark and she soon found other doves. Thus, Jesus draws sinners in unto salvation. When He draws a man to Himself, then He draws Him to the Church and he comes where he shall meet with fit society that shall console him and help him during the rest of his days. I cannot preach as I would, but I know that I am telling you that which, if my Lord will but bless it, will save and comfort your souls! I pray Him to put me on one side, altogether, and to come–and with His own pierced hands pull you in unto Himself!

III. So I finish with this third point. THAT WHICH JESUS DOES TO HIS SERVANTS AND TO SINNERS, HE WOULD HAVE US DO. Now, you people of God, listen to me, and do what I now entreat of you in my Master's name.

In the first place, look out for souls. Now, Noah, go to the window! There is that dove, you know, fluttering somewhere–go

and look out for it, go to the window, Noah! He does not need to be told to go, for there he is. Noah loves his dove, so he is watching for her at the window. Dear people of God, often go to the window! In your families look for the salvation of your children. In your workshops look for the salvation of your employees and those with whom you work! Perhaps that is a new thought to some of you. If you can get them to work for a little less money, you look out for that, but oh, that you would look out for their salvation! To see your employees saved is the best profit that you can, any of you, have! Watch for their souls and do so, not only at home, but when you come to your place of worship. We have friends in this Tabernacle who are looking all over the place while I am speaking. I do not say that they are not attending to my message, but I do not think they are attending so much to my words as to those to whom I am speaking! I have frequently seen a Brother making his way very quietly down to a certain spot where he has noticed some of you sitting very attentively, some newcomers, perhaps, who have never been here before, and it is more than likely that he will speak to some of you before this service is over.

I hope somebody will ask you whether you are saved and, if so, you will begin to find that there are some who desire to bring you into close quarters! I think that it ought to be so. I cannot bear the thought of your coming here without getting a blessing. I have to fire the Gospel cannon from this platform–it is loaded with grape

shot and it often does great execution–yet many of you may not be hit that way, but, happily, my friends can come to you with their little pocket pistols and so reach many whom I miss! Get to close quarters with them, Brothers and Sisters! Find out whether they are saved or not! We need a great deal of this kind of work. Now then, Noah, go to the window and look out–be you an old Christian or a young Christian–be on the look out for sinners!

Noah goes to the window and, sure enough, there is his dove. Then Noah stretches out his hands, as I want you to do. Stretch out a hand to sinners. Do it very gently, for doves are not bears, you know–the souls of men are not like the skins of tigers. Stretch out your hands to sinners, but do it in a very loving and gentle way. Try, if you can, to let them see that there is a friend near who will be happy to help them to Christ. Stretch out your hands and if you can, lay hold of them. I do not know how Noah caught his dove, whether by the wings, or the legs, or the neck, but he did catch her, and pulled her into the ark. Now try if you can to lay hold of a soul for Christ–get a firm grip on it! This is not child's play! He that can catch doves with his hands is a wise man and he that would win souls must be wise. Try to catch souls, if you can, but do it gently. Remember that they are doves and, therefore, be very tender and very gentle with them. But, being doves, they are apt to fly away–therefore hold them fast–and do not let them go.

Perhaps they will not like you to touch them. Never mind that–go on as mildly and lovingly as you can, yet do seek to give them a pull and do not rest until they are with you in the ark, that is to say, till they are in Christ! Till they are trusting Him, till they are resting in Him, till His precious blood has washed them and they are saved, as you trust you are!

I do not think that we are half earnest enough in dealing with our fellow men. I remember a young man who, when dying, said to his brother, "I am afraid I am lost, my brother, and I cannot help saying to you, 'Why were you not more earnest about my salvation?'" His elder brother answered, "John, I have spoken to you once or twice about your soul." "Once or twice!" replied the other, "You ought to have been always at me." "Well, but I did frequently speak to you about Divine things." "But," said he, "if you knew that I was perishing, why did you not shake me? Why did you not do something unusual with me? Why did you not weep over me? Why did you not force me to think? My soul is lost and you have shown but very little care about it."

Perhaps that was a very hard thing to say, and an unkind thing, and a self-excusing thing, but do you not think that some people might say that of you and of me? We have never been earnest enough in seeking the salvation of their souls. Mr. Rowland Hill's story about this matter is a good one. He said, "I hear them say that poor old Mr. Hill makes a great noise and often shouts when he is

preaching, the poor old gentleman gets quite excited." "Yes," added Mr. Hill, "and I was one day walking out at Wotton-under-Edge, and I was going by a gravel pit, or a chalk pit, and it fell in and buried a man. And I went running down into the village as fast as ever my old legs would carry me, crying out that there was a man likely to be buried alive–and the people rushed out to try to save him! And they did not say, then, as they do, now, 'Poor old Mr. Hill is making a deal of noise.'"

Oh, that we were as earnest about the souls of men as we can sometimes be about their bodies! Do try, then, you who love the Lord, to pull them in, even as Noah pulled the dove in unto himself into the ark.

I leave the text with you. When I cannot preach, I always wish that all of you may be preaching. If the preacher seems to speak feebly, take up what he has said and work at it, and go and do better with it. And if you will do so, it will be better than if I, alone, had done better. The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Ge 8:21 • Human Depravity and Divine Mercy

SERMON 0615

H*uman Depravity And Divine Mercy*

"And the Lord smelled a sweet savor. And the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground anymore for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again destroy anymore every thing living as I have done."

Genesis 8:21

PETER tells us that Noah's ark and Baptism are figures of salvation. He puts the two together as pictures of the way by which we are saved. Noah was not saved by the world's being gradually reformed and restored to its primitive innocence, but a sentence of condemnation was pronounced and death, burial and resurrection ensued. Noah must go into the ark and become dead to the world.

The floods must descend from Heaven and rise upward from their secret fountains beneath the earth. The ark must be submerged with many waters–here was burial. And then after a time Noah and his family must come out into a totally new world of resurrection life.

It is the same in the figure of Baptism. The person baptized, if he is already dead with Christ, is buried–not purified and improved–but buried beneath the waves. And when he rises he professes that he enjoys newness of life. Baptism is setting forth just what Noah's ark set forth–that salvation is by death and burial. You must be dead to the world. The flesh must be dead with Christ, buried with Christ–not improved, not made better, but utterly put aside as unimprovable, as worthless, dead–a thing to be buried and to be forgotten.

And we must come forth in resurrection life, feeling that above us there is a new Heaven and beneath us a new earth where righteousness dwells, seeing that we are new creatures in Christ Jesus. It would be very instructive to dwell upon each point of the resemblance between Noah's deliverance and the salvation of every elect soul. Noah enters into the ark–there is a time when we distinctly enter into Christ and become one with Him. Noah was shut in the ark so that he could never come out again till God should open the door. There is a time when every child of God is shut in–when faith and full assurance give him an evidence that he is indissolubly one with Christ Jesus. He is grasped in Christ's hand

so that none can pluck him out. He is hidden in Christ's loins so that none can separate him from the love of God.

Then comes the flood–there is a season in the Christian's experience when he discovers his own depravity. He is saved. He is in the ark. He is, however, still a sinner, still the subject of inbred lusts. Suddenly all these corruptions break up! They beat upon his ark, they assail his faith, they endeavor, if possible, to drown his soul in sin. But he is not destroyed by them–for, by the grace of God, he is where other men are not–he is where he cannot be drowned by sin. He is in Christ Jesus! He mounts as the floods deepen. The more he feels the depth of his depravity, the more he admires the fullness of the atoning sacrifice! The more terrible the temptation, the more joyous is his consolation in Christ Jesus.

And so he rises in holy communion towards his God. Then comes the wind–typical of the breath of the sacred Spirit by which the floods of corruption are calmed and peace reigns within and the soul sings, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Then the tops of the mountains appear–sanctification takes place upon a part of the man. There are some bright graces which glisten out of the general flood of corruption. There are some points of his new-born nature which delight him with their beauty. His ark has grounded and settled–he no longer floats, so to speak, tossed about with a struggling faith and contending unbelief–he feels that as Christ

Jesus is forever seated firmly at the right hand of God, so he, in Christ Jesus, has entered into rest.

The ark grounded on the top of Ararat–so does the Believer's experience come to a settled condition. He is no more moved about with fears and questions, but rejoices in hope of the Glory of God. He sends forth his thoughts in search after evidence of his complete salvation, and probably he sends out some of his own ignorant carnal expectations, just as Noah sent out the raven. These ignorant imaginations of what the work of the Spirit is go forth and they never return earnest prayers go to and fro. By and by they come back with a token for good, some choice mercy from the hand of God–an olive branch of assured peace–and the Believer surely knows not only that he is in Christ, not only that he is grounded in Christ, but that all the waters are calmed, all sin is gone, all danger removed, all death destroyed!

Then occurs a period where God opens the door. Christ had been as a sort of prison to the Christian up till then. The Cross had been a burden. He did not rejoice in liberty. But God the Father now comes with the blessed Spirit and opens the door and the Believer is fully at liberty in the new world. The saved soul's first act is, like Noah, to build an altar unto God and, as a priest, to offer sacrifice, which, as it rises to Heaven, is accepted because it is a memorial of Christ. The Lord smells a sweat savor and though the believing man is still full of sin and from his youth up has an evil

imagination, yet he hears the Covenant voice which says, “I will no more curse, I will no more destroy.”

He hears the Covenant promise which confirms forever the faithfulness of God and he rejoices to inherit, like Noah, a new world where righteousness dwells. I do not lay any stress upon these interpretations, but I know the Apostle says concerning Hagar and Sarah, “which things are an allegory.” I believe that the book of Genesis is a book of dispensational Truth and if it were rightly read, not by the eye of curiosity, but by the heart of the student who has been made wise to see the deep things of God, very much of Divine and holy teaching would be discoverable in it.

But now I come to the text itself. We have here, first, a very sad and painful fact, “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” We have, secondly, God’s most extraordinary reasoning, “I will not again curse the ground for man’s sake, for the imagination of man’s heart is evil.” Then, thirdly, we have some inferences less extraordinary but practical to ourselves from the text.

To begin, then, with the text, we have here A MOST PAINFUL FACT that man’s nature is incurable–“the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” You will remember, before the flood, in the fifth verse of the sixth chapter it is written, “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only continually evil.”

After the flood it is just the same. The description in the sixth chapter belonged to all the antediluvian race.

You might have hoped that after so terrible a judgment, when only a few–a picked and peculiar few–that is, eight, were saved by water, that then, as man began anew with a better stock, the old branches that were sere and rotten being cut away–that now the nature of man would be improved. It is not one whit so. The same God who, looking at man, declared that his imagination was evil before the flood, pronounces the very same verdict upon them afterwards. Oh God! How hopeless is human nature! How impossible is it that the carnal mind should be reconciled to God! How needful is it that You should give us new hearts and right spirits, seeing that the old nature is so evil that even the floods of Your judgments cannot cure it of its evil imaginations!

I would have you studiously notice the words used in both these passages–the antediluvian and the postdiluvian verdict of God. Look at the fifth verse of the sixth chapter–God saw not only outward sin that was great and multiplied and cried to Him for vengeance–He saw sin in the sons of men, the descendants of Cain. Worse still, He saw treachery and departure from God in the sons of the chosen ones, the sons of Seth had gone astray, also. The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair and the two races became mingled so as to produce monsters of iniquity. But,

worse than that, He saw that the thoughts of men's hearts were evil–man could not think without being evil.

No, more! The substratum which underlies actual thought–unformed, unfashioned thought–the eggs, the embryos of thought, called here the imagination of the thought, the first conception, the infant motions of the soul–all these God found to be evil. But observe, He says they were, "only evil." Not one trace of good! No gold amidst the dross, no light amidst the darkness–they were "only evil." And then He adds that word "continually." What? Never any repentance? Never any yearning towards the right? No pure drops of holiness now and then? No, never!

"Every imagination"–notice that word. The whole verse is most clear, a broom that sweeps man clean of all boasted good. "Every imagination"–when he was at his best, when he stood at God's altar, when he tried to be right–even then his thoughts had evil in them! Dr. Dick says, "All man's thoughts, all his desires, all his purposes are evil, expressly or by implication because the subject of them is avowedly sinful, or because they do not proceed from a holy principle and are not directed to a proper end. It is not occasionally that the human soul is thus under the influence of depravity. This is its habit and state. It seems impossible to construct a sentence which should more distinctly express its total corruption than this."

Look at this other passage which is our text. You will see it gives a different phase of the same evil, but it does not abate one jot or tittle of it. It is still, "the imagination of man's heart." It is still the inward character, the core, the pith, the marrow of mankind which God is dealing with. It is not the stream which comes from man that is foul but the fountain of man–the innermost source of the fountain! The imagination of his heart is evil–and we are told here what we are not told in the other text–that his thoughts are evil from his youth, that is to say, from his earliest childhood.

And it would not be evil from his childhood in every case if there were not certain seeds of evil sown before that and therefore we can go further and in the words of Holy Scripture we can confess with sorrowful truthfulness–"Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." From the very earliest imaginable period in which human nature exists it is a defiled, tainted thing and only worthy of God's utter abhorrence! And were it not that He smells a sweet savor in the sacrifice of Christ, He would say, as He did say in the sixth chapter, "He repented that He had made man on the earth and it grieved Him at His heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth."

I have thus brought out this painful fact distinctly, I hope, before you. It is true both before and after the flood. If you want any proof of its being true now turn to the scores of passages of Scripture

which all prove it. I think, however, if our time were limited, as it is this morning, I should prefer to mention the third chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. It is the most sweeping description of the universality of human depravity that could possibly have been penned. I will read from the ninth to the nineteenth verse–"What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God.

"They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable. There is none that does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulcher. With their tongues have they used deceit. The poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things so ever the Law says, it says to them who are under the Law: that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God."

Jonathan Edwards says upon this passage, "If the words which the Apostle uses here (Rom. 3:10-19) do not most fully and determinately signify a universality, no words ever used in the Bible, or elsewhere, are sufficient to do it. I might challenge any man to produce any one paragraph in the Scripture, from the

beginning to the end, where there is such a repetition and accumulation of terms so strongly and emphatically and carefully formulated to express the most perfect and absolutely universality, or any place to be compared to it. What instance is there in the Scripture, or indeed any other writing when the meaning is only the much greater part?

"Where this meaning is signified in such a manner by repeating such expressions, 'They are all,' 'they are all together,' 'every one,' 'all the world' joined to multiplied negative terms, to show the universality to be without exception? Saying, 'There is no flesh,' 'there is none, there is none, there is none, there is none,' four times over. Besides the addition of, 'no, not one,' 'no, not one,' once and again… So that if this matter [universal depravity] is not here set forth plainly, expressly and fully, it must be because no words can do it. And it is not in the power of language, or any manner of terms and phrases, however contrived and heaped one upon another, determinately to let us remember the confessions of God's people."

You never heard a saint on his knees yet tell the Lord that he had a good nature, that he did not need renewing. Saints, as they grow in Divine Grace, are made to feel more and more acutely the evil of their old nature. You will find that those who are most like Christ have the deepest knowledge of their own depravity and are most humble while they confess their sinfulness. Those men who know

not their own hearts may be able to boast, but that is simple ignorance, for if you will take down the biographies of any persons esteemed among us for holiness and for knowledge in the things of God, you will find them frequently crying out under a sense of inward carnality and sin.

If I may return to Scripture I cannot help quoting David, "Behold I was born in sin and shapen in iniquity." It is a most villainous thing that some persons try to slander David's mother and to suppose that there was something irregular about his birth which made him speak as he has done! Whereas there cannot be the slightest imputation upon that admirable woman. David himself speaks of her with intense respect and says, "Save the son of Your handmaid" as though he felt it no discredit to be the son of such a woman.

She was, doubtless, one of the excellent of the earth and yet, excellent as she was, it could not but be otherwise that in sin her son was conceived. Let us not at all attempt to escape from the force of what David says. He is using no exaggerated expressions. There is no indication of hyperbole throughout the whole Psalm. He is a broken-hearted man on his knees. He is confessing his own sin with Bathsheba and is not likely either to bring any accusation against his own mother or to use exaggerated terms! Beloved it is so. We, all of us, the best of us still have to bear about with us the marks of the unclean thing from which we sprang.

Take Paul again–was there ever a man who knew more of what sanctity of nature means, or who was brought nearer to the image of Christ? Yet he cries out, “Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death.” He finds no joy until he can say, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Still I think we have another proof, namely, our own observation. We have lived long enough to observe with our own eyes and by our reading that sin is the universal disease of manhood. Is it not certain, according to observation, that man’s heart is evil? They used to tell pretty tales about the charming innocence of men dwelling in the wooded bowers of primeval forests, untainted by the vices of civilization, unpolluted by the inventions of commerce and art.

The woods of America were searched and no such sweet babes of grace were discovered. The ferocity and cruelty of the Indians justify my saying that they were hateful and hating one another. The blood-red tomahawk might have been emblazoned as the Redman’s coat of arms and his eyes glaring with revenge might be taken as the true index of his character. Travelers have penetrated of late into the center of Africa where we may expect to see nature in its primitive excellence and what is the report that is brought back to us? Why, it is nature in its primitive devilry, that is all!

Let such abominable tyrants as Messrs. Grant and Speke describe to us indicate to us what man is when he is left in his primeval state, untainted by civilization–he is simply a greater devil–he is

naked and he is not ashamed! In this, only, is he like our unfallen parents. Again, try the mildest races. There is the mild Hindu. You look into his gentle face and you cannot suppose him capable of cruelty. Trust well that mild Hindu, subdued by British arms so speedily and so cheerfully bowing his neck to the yoke. But you may as well trust the sleek and cunning tiger from his jungle–let the story of the Sepoy rebellion of a few years ago show us the gentleness of the mild Hindu!

Live among the mild Hindu and if you dare read the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, remember that it is a decent account of what, in ordinary life, is practiced among the Hindu but which could not be more clearly described, because the mouth of modesty would refuse to speak it and the ears of modesty would tingle at the hearing of it. The life of the most respectable Hindu is tainted with vices too vile to mention. "Yes, but still," says one, "we must look at children, because sin may enter into us through education–let us look at children."

Very well, I am willing to look at children and I am unwilling that anybody should say a word that is harsh or severe against children's nature. But I will say that any man who declares children to be born perfect never was a father! If he would only watch his own child–not merely when that child has its toys around it and is pleased and happy, but when its little temper is ruffled–he would soon perceive evil nestling there. Your child without evil? You

without eyes, you mean!! If you will only look and listen you will soon discover, if no other fault, this one, “they go astray from the womb, speaking lies.”

One of the earliest vices of children which needs to be corrected with most constant and wise rigor is the tendency towards falsehood. It is all very pretty for people to talk about the innocence of children. But I would like them to have to keep one of the nursery schools like those at Manchester, where the children are left while the mothers are at work in the mills! They would soon discover in their pulling one another’s hair, and scratching at one another’s eyes, and such like pretty little diversions and innocent freaks, that they are not altogether the sweet babes of innocence they are supposed to be!

“Well,” says one, “still, human nature may have some spiritual good in it. Look at the men who make illustrious the page of history–look at Socrates, for instance–religion did nothing for Socrates, but yet what a fine character he was.” Who told you that? I will venture to say that the philosopher’s character would not bear description in a decent assembly. We know from undoubted authority that the purest philosophers at times indulged in bestiality and filth. Solon and Socrates were no exceptions. When Infidels hold up these sages as being such patterns of what human nature might become, they have history dead against them. “The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. There is no soundness in it.”

And this, be it remembered, is without an exception in the long history of humanity, say six thousand years. There is not one that has escaped contamination, not one who has come into the world clean, not one who dares go before his Maker's bar and say, "Great God, I have never sinned, but have kept Your Law from my youth up."

II. Now I want you to notice, in the second place, a most extraordinary thing–when I noticed it yesterday I was surprised and overwhelmed with grateful admiration–that is, GOD'S EXTRAORDINARY REASONING. Good reasoning, but most extraordinary. He says, "I will not again curse the ground anymore for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Strange logic! In the sixth chapter He said man was evil and therefore He destroyed him. In the eighth chapter He says man is evil from his youth and therefore He will not destroy him!

Strange reasoning! Strange reasoning!–to be accounted for by the little circumstance in the beginning of the verse, "the Lord smelled a sweet savor." There was a sacrifice there–that makes all the difference! When God looks on sin apart from sacrifice, Justice says, "Destroy! Destroy! Smite! Curse! Destroy!" But when there is a sacrifice, God looks on sin with eyes of mercy and though Justice says, "Destroy," He says, "No, I have punished My dear Son. I have punished Him and will spare the sinner." Mercy looks

to see if she cannot find some loophole, something that she can make into an excuse why she may spare mankind.

Is then, natural depravity, an excuse for sin? Does God use it as such? No, Beloved–that our heart is vile is rather an aggravation of the vileness of our action than any excuse for it. Yet there is this one thing–we are born sinners and God sees there, I will say, a sort of loophole. Rightly, upon the terms of Justice, there is no conceivable reason why He should have mercy upon us. But Divine Grace makes and invents a reason. O may I be helped, while I try to show you where I think the ground of mercy lies! Devils fell separately–we have every reason to believe that every fallen angel sinned on his own account and fell. And it is very likely that on this account there was no possibility, as we know of, of their restoration–every separate fallen spirit was given up forever to chains and darkness and flames of fire.

But men! Men did not fall separately and individually. Our case is a somewhat different one from that of fallen angels. We, all of us, fell without our own consent, without having, in fact, any finger in it, actually. We fell federally in our covenant head–it is in consequence of our falling in Adam that our heart becomes evil from our youth. Now it looks to me as if God's mercy caught that. He seemed to say, "These My creatures have, according to my arrangement of federation, fallen representatively. Then I can save them representatively. They perished in one, Adam. I will save

them in Another. They fell not by their own overt act, though, indeed, their own overt acts have added to this and deserve My wrath, but their first fall was not through themselves. They are sinful from their very infancy. Therefore He says, "I will deliver them by Another as they fell by another."

I do not know whether I can make it clear. I do not think that this was any reason before the bar of Justice why God should save us, for I believe that He might justly have condemned the whole race of Adam on account of Adam's sin and their own guilt. But I do think that this was a blessed loophole through which His mercy could, as it were, come fairly to the sons of men. "There," He says, "I made them not distinct individuals but a race. They fell as a race, they shall rise as an elect race–'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' 'As by the transgression of one many were made sinners, so by the righteousness of one shall many be made righteous.' "

I think you see the drift of it, then. Man's being sinful, is in the logic of justice, a reason for punishment. Man's being sinful from his youth by inheritance from his federal head becomes, through mercy, a reason why Sovereign Grace should light upon men while fallen angels are left to perish forever. Oh, I bless God that I did not fall first of all myself. I do bless the day, now, that I fell in Adam, for it may be if I had never fallen in Adam I should have fallen in myself and then I must have been, like fallen angels, shut out

forever from the Presence of God and in the flames of Hell! One of the old Divines used to say of Adam's sin, "Beata culpa"–"Happy fault!"

I dare not say that, but in one sense I will say, blessed Fall that renders it possible for me to rise! Blessed way of ruin which renders it possible for the blessed way of salvation to be brought about–salvation by Substitution! Salvation by Sacrifice! Salvation by a new Covenant Head, who for us is offered up that God may smell a sweet savor and may deliver us! I hope nobody will misconstrue what I have said and make out that I teach that human depravity is an excuse for sin–God forbid! It is only in the eyes of Divine Grace that it becomes the door of mercy.

You know if your child has offended you, you do not want to chastise him and yet you feel he deserves it. How you do try, if you are a loving parent, to find some reason why you may let him go. There is no reason–you know that. If you deal with him in terms of justice, there is no reason why having sinned he should not smart for it. But you keep casting about for an excuse–perhaps it is his mother's birthday and you let him off for that. Or else there was some little circumstance which softened the offense for which you may have him excused.

I do not know whether the story is true, but it is said of Queen Victoria when she was just queen–just a girl–she was asked to sign a death warrant for a person who, by court martial, had been

condemned to die. It is told that she said to the Duke, “Cannot you find any reason why this man should be pardoned?” The Duke said, “No, it was a very great offense, he ought to be punished.” “But was he a good soldier?” The Duke said he was a shamefully bad soldier, had always been noted as a bad soldier. “Well, cannot you invent for me any reason?” “Well,” he said, “I have every reason to believe from testimony that he was a good man as a man, although a bad soldier.” “That will do,” she said, and she wrote across the warrant, “pardoned”–not because the man deserved it–but because she wanted a reason for having mercy.

So my God seems to look upon man and after He has looked him through and through and cannot see anything, at last He says, “He is evil from his youth,” and he writes “Pardoned.” He smells the sweet savor first and His heart is turned towards the poor rebel. Then He turns to him with mercy and blesses him.

III. But now, thirdly, by your leave and patience, I shall have to lead you to a few inferences from the doctrine of the depravity of man. If the heart is so evil, then it is impossible for us to enter Heaven as we are. We cannot suppose that those holy gates shall enclose those whose imaginations and thoughts are evil, and evil continually. No, if that is the place into which nothing shall enter that defiles, then no man being what he was in his first birth can ever stand there!

Another step. Then it is quite clear that if I am to enter Heaven no outward reform will ever do, for if I wash my face, that does not change my heart. And if I give up all my outward sins and become outwardly what I ought to be, yet still, if it is true that my heart is the villainous thing which Scripture says it is, then my outward reformation cannot touch that and I am still shut out of Heaven. If inside that cup and platter there is all this filthiness, I may cleanse the outside, but I have not touched that which will shut me out of Heaven.

I go, then, a little farther and I observe that I must have a new nature–not new practice only, but a new nature–not new thoughts or new words, but a new nature so as to become a totally new man. And when I draw the inference, I have Scripture to back me at once, for what does Jesus say to Nicodemus? "You must be born again." But what is to be born again? To my first birth, I owe all I am by nature. I must get a second birth to which I am to owe all I am as I enter Heaven. Multitudes of persons have been saying, "What is Regeneration?" Here they have been writing hundreds of pamphlets and no two of them agree upon what Regeneration is except that they say that a man may be regenerated and not converted.

Here is an extraordinary thing! An unconverted man who is regenerated? One who is an enemy to God and yet he has in himself a new nature? He has been born again and yet is not

converted to God? What? A Regeneration that does not convert? A Regeneration, in fact, that leaves men just where they were before? But to every babe in Christ the word, "regenerate," is as plain as possible–he wants no definition, no description. "To be born again? Why," he says, "I comprehend that it is to be made over again, a new creature in Christ Jesus! My first birth makes me a creature– my second birth makes me a new creature and I become what I never was before."

I must remember that what is needed in me is not to bring out and develop what is good in me, for, according to God's Word in the sixth of Genesis, there is nothing good, it is only evil. Grace does not enter to educate the germs of holiness within me, for there is no germ of good in man at all–he is "evil continually"– and every imagination is "only evil." I must, then, die to sin! My old nature must be slain, it cannot be mended! It is too bad, too rotten to be patched up–that must die. By the death of Jesus it must be destroyed. It must be buried with Christ and I must rise in resurrection life to conformity with my Lord Jesus.

Well then, advancing one step further–It is clear if I must be this before I can enter Heaven that I cannot give myself a new nature. A crab tree cannot transform itself into an apple tree! If I am a wolf I cannot make myself a sheep. Water can rise to its own proper level, but it cannot go beyond it without pressure. I must have, then, something worked in me more than I can work in myself and this,

indeed, is good Scriptural doctrine. “That which is born of the flesh”–what is it? When the flesh has done its very best what is it?–“That which is born of the flesh is flesh”–it is filthy to begin with and filth comes of it–only “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit: marvel not that I said unto you you must be born again.”

My soul must come under the hand of the Spirit. Just as a piece of clay is on the potter’s wheel and is made to revolve and is touched by the fingers of the potter and molded into what he wishes it to be, so must I lie passively in the hands of the Spirit of God and He must work in me to will and to do of His own good pleasure. And then I shall begin to work out my own salvation with fear and trembling, but never, never till then. I must have more than nature can give me, more than my mother gave me, more than my father gave me, more than flesh and blood can produce under the most favorable circumstances. I must have the Spirit of God from Heaven.

Then comes this inquiry, “Have I received it? What is the best evidence of it?” The best evidence of it is this–Am I resting upon Christ Jesus, alone, for salvation? You generally find on potters' vessels that there is a certain mark so that you can know who made them. I want to know whether I am a vessel fit for the Master’s use, molded by His hands and fashioned by His Spirit. Now, every single vessel that comes out of God’s hands has a Cross on it. Have you the Cross on you? Are you resting upon Christ’s bloody

Atonement made on Calvary? Is He to your soul your one rock of refuge–your one only hope? Can you say this morning–

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling–
Naked, come to You for dress;
Helpless, look to You for Grace.
Black, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die!"?

Then, my Brothers and Sisters, you have a new heart and a right spirit! You are a new creature in Christ Jesus, for simple faith in Christ is what the old Adam never could attain! A simple faith in Jesus is the great, sure mark of a work of the Holy Spirit in your soul by which you are made to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? Do you take Him to be God's Anointed to you? Do you trust yourself to Him to plead for you, to work for you, to fulfill the Law for you, to offer Atonement for you?

If so, if Jesus is the Christ to you–you are born of God. The Spirit which is in you now will drive out the old nature, slay it utterly, cut it up root and branch and you shall one day bear the image of the heavenly, even as you have till now borne the image of the earthly. May God bless these words of mine to your souls' good.

"Eternal Spirit, we confess

And sing the wonders of Your Grace!
Your power conveys our blessings down
From God the Father and the Son.
Enlightened by Your heavenly ray,
Our shades and darkness turn to day.
Your inward teachings make us know
Our danger and our refuge, too.
Your power and glory works within,
And breaks the chains of reigning sin,
Does our imperious lusts subdue,
And forms our wretched hearts anew.
The troubled conscience knows Your voice,
Your cheering Words awake our joys;
Your Words allay the stormy wind,
And calm the surges of the mind."

Ge 8:22 • The Sermon of the Seasons

SERMON 1891

T*he Sermon Of The Seasons*

"While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

Genesis 8:22

OUR Savior constantly taught the people by parables and I think He would have His ministers do the same. The condition of things just now, both as to weather and business, furnishes a very plain and instructive parable which it would not be wise to pass over. Every morning when we wake, we hope for a change of wind, a glimpse of the sun and the end of the frost and we still moan with the poet–

"Oh, the long and dreary Winter!

Oh, the cold and cruel Winter!"

We say to ourselves, Will Spring never come? In addition to this, trade and commerce continue in a state of stagnation–crowds are out of employment and where business is carried on, it yields little profit. Our watchmen are asked if they discern any signs of returning day and they answer, "No." Thus we bow our heads in a common affliction and ask, each man, comfort for his fellow, for as yet we see not our signs, neither does the eastern sky grow gray with the hopeful light of the long-expected morning. Having faith in God we faint not, but believe that a lesson of love for us is written by His hand in these black characters. Let us spell it out with childlike confidence.

Our text takes us back to the time when the waters of the Flood had just receded and God opened the door of the ark and bade Noah and his family come forth into a new world. For a time there had been confusion–the seasons were mixed up, the perpetual downpour of the rain had almost turned day into night and whether it was summer or winter could scarcely be told. The frame of Nature seemed to be out of joint, her order suspended. And now the Lord, in making a promise to Noah that He would never destroy the earth again with a flood, also declares that while the earth remains there shall be no more of the confusion of the seasons and mingling of day and night which had brought such destruction upon all living things. As there should be no more a general deluge, so should

there be no more a serious disarrangement of the course of the seasons and the temperature appropriate thereto. Seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter and day and night are to succeed each other in their perpetually unchanging change so long as the present reign of forbearance shall last.

Till comes the close of time, the rolling year, made up of alternate day and night, shall pass through cold and heat in due order. We are grateful to God for thus settling in His mind that so it shall be. We are at ease because we know that He will not, again, lift His hand to destroy every living thing with a flood of water. He will deal with men in longsuffering, tender mercy and forbearance. He will not use the stern weapons of destruction, but will try the tender ministrations of patience and Grace–that men may be led to repentance. There will come an end to this dispensation, but while the reign of forbearance lasts, Nature shall keep her appointed marches and we need not fear a disorderly rush or a destructive chaos. “Four seasons fill the measure of the year.” In their mysterious round, they come and go, and all combined display a moving harmony of wise design most glorifying to our God. Fear not in the day of tempest, for the rain shall not deluge the earth. The Lord sets His rainbow in the cloud as the symbol of His Covenant with mankind. Fear not in the black midnight–God will rekindle the lamp of day and chase away the darkness!

It is very singular that when the Lord thus ushers in the reign of forbearance He gives as His reason the following statement–"I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." This is very amazing because this seems to have been the powerful reason why the Lord had already destroyed the guilty race from off the face of the earth! In the fifth and sixth verses of the sixth chapter we read–"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart." Here we have almost the same words! Can the reason for judgment become the argument for mercy? Assuredly it can! God who changes not absolutely, yet changes His hand in His dealing with men. He had left them to themselves and permitted them to live through centuries, but the longer they lived, the more wicked they grew, until sin reached to a horrible degree of infamy! Man becomes a bad enough sinner when he lives to be 70, but what he became at 700 or more it is somewhat difficult to guess!

We wonder not that there were giants in those days–giants in crime as well as in stature. The Lord saw that however long man lived, he only grew greater adept in sin, for the imagination of his heart remained evil and even grew to an intolerable height of iniquity–and, therefore, God said that He would destroy the race

and begin anew. But when the Lord looked down upon those whom He had spared, who were to be the parents of a new race, He saw that in them, also, there was the same fountain of evil and that their hearts, also, yielded evil desires and devices continually. Then He resolved to shorten the life of man so that no individuals might ever arrive at so horrible a ripeness and cleverness of iniquity. But at the same time He said, "I will bear with them. I have dealt sternly with them, but they do not change; the few whom I have snatched from a watery grave are still inclined to sin. This dreadful expedient has not washed away the rebellious tendencies of the human heart. Therefore I will deal leniently and gently with them, manifesting a long forbearance, that man may have space for repentance. I will no more destroy every living thing, because destruction itself does not avail to banish sin." Thus it is not difficult to see how that which, to Divine holiness was a reason for judgement, may be used by Divine pity as a reason for mercy!

But what do you think could have made the reasoning assume this new form? I attribute it to one thing never to be forgotten. Read the verse which precedes our text–"And Noah built an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl and offered burnt offerings on the altar; and the Lord smelled a sweet savor." The sacrifice is the turning point! Without a sacrifice, sin clamors for vengeance and God sends a destroying flood. But the sacrifice presented by Noah was typical of the coming Sacrifice of

God's only begotten Son and of the effectual Atonement in it provided for human sin. The very shadow of the one great Propitiation changed the state of the world! Now the Lord pleads with Himself for Grace as once He argued for doom. He speaks, of course, after the manner of men–it is only to our apprehension that these things are so–for Jehovah changes not and He is always Love and Wisdom. For the sake of the sacrifice, God resolves to bear with man as with one who is incurably unwise, or desperately sick. He determines to look upon the evil tendency of man's imagination rather as an inveterate disease than as an unbearable provocation. He deals very patiently with the race and no more sweeps it away in His wrath. See what the Lord will do when a sacrifice is provided! I think I hear Him say of the earth, "Deliver it from flood and bid the seasons keep their round of beneficence, for I have found a Ransom."

Thus I introduce to you the text and I would have you notice, dear Friends, that in that text there is, first of all, a hint, A SOLEMN HINT OF WARNING. It begins thus–"While the earth remains." I hear a sound in the heart of the text like subterranean thunder! The voice of the text is a voice of mercy, but there is an undertone of "terrible things in righteousness." "While the earth remains" implies that the earth will not always remain. There is an end appointed by the Most High and it will surely come–then the seasons will melt into the endless age and time shall be promoted

into eternity. The earth has remained, now, century after century, but alas, it has but little changed towards God! The whole world still lies in the Wicked One–darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the nations. Jehovah has a people, “a remnant according to the election of Grace,” and for their sakes the earth remains yet a little while, but its end draws nearer every hour. “God has appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man, Christ Jesus.”

An hour is set when mercy shall no longer hold back the axe from the barren tree and forbearance shall no more restrain the angel with the sharp sickle from reaping the vintage of the earth! Love now journeys to and fro among the sons of men, with the voice of trembling pathos, pleading with them to be reconciled to God. But her mission will come to an end–the day of Grace will be over–and the reign of judgment will come. Let us not reckon too much upon this world’s enduring even for a little while! Let us not set our love upon anything that is upon it, for here we have no continuing city. “The things which are seen are temporal.” The world shall pass away and all the works that are in it shall be burned up–even “the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” There is a day coming when floods of fire shall be let loose–they shall fall from above and burst upward from below–and all material things shall be melted in one common conflagration. Poor world, you, too, are surely doomed! God is gracious to you, but you are as a wreck drifting upon the

rocks, or as a tree waiting for the axe! Believers in the testimony of God can joyfully say, “We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.” Therefore we are not dismayed.

I would have you notice again, dear Friends, that the time when the earth shall no longer remain is not mentioned. The warning is left indefinite as to time, though definite enough as to fact. The expression, “While the earth remains,” is proof enough that it will remain only for a season, but it is dumb as the tongue of death as to the date when that season shall close. “The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.” But when the hour of her deliverance shall come, the best instructed cannot tell. Do not attempt to prophesy and especially do not venture upon dates. “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power.” “Of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, but My Father only.” The uncertainty of the end of all things is intended to keep us continually on the watch. We are to remain upon the tiptoe of expectation and never to dream that we can reckon upon a certain length of time before the great and terrible Day of the Lord. If you knew when Christ would come, you might be tempted to spend the interval in neglect and wantonness. But, as it is written, “In such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes,” it is the Lord’s intent that you should stand

with your loins girt and your lamps trimmed, waiting for the midnight cry, “Behold, He comes!”

Let me further remark that the day when the remaining of the earth shall cease cannot be very far off, for, according to the Hebrew, which you have in the margin of your Bibles, the text runs thus–“As yet all the days of the earth, seedtime and harvest shall not cease.” The “while” of the earth’s remaining is counted by days–months or years are not mentioned, much less centuries. The earth seems gray with age to us, but in the language of Inspiration, the present stage of its history is reckoned by days. There will, one day, come a last day and let us not reckon that the time is distant, for Peter says, “The end of all things is at hand.” And he adds, “Be you, therefore, sober and watch unto prayer.” “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness.” One day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.

If geologists speak correctly concerning the history of the world, it has lasted many myriads of years, already, and passed through many periods before it came to that which is described in the first chapter of Genesis. The era of man is that which God describes to us by the Inspired Penman and we are led to believe that this era will be a very short one. From the day when God fitted up this earth for the abode of man to the time when He shall consume it with fervent heat, there will be comparatively a very short space of

time. God lives by millions of years and, therefore, a few thousand years to Him are but as a watch in the night. Let it be thus far understood by us that this dispensation is not to be a protracted one and that the duration of the world in its present state is to be exceedingly brief as compared with preceding and succeeding ages. The life of this present evil world is but a span–it is also of few days and full of trouble. But I must also add that the era of sin and Grace is crowded with marvelous manifestations of the Glory of God in infinite love and mercy.

II. Thus, then, there is a hint of warning in our text. But secondly, there is A SENTENCE OF PROMISE, rich and full of meaning–"While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease." It is a promise concerning temporal things, but yet it breathes a spiritual air and has about it the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed!

This promise has been kept. It is a long time since it was written. It is longer, still, since it was resolved upon in the mind of God. But it has never failed. There have been times when cold has threatened to bind the whole year in the chains of frost, but genial warmth has pushed it aside. Seedtime and harvest have been threatened, but they have come. The harvest may not have been abundant, but yet there has been a harvest sufficient to sustain the race. Days have been dark and hardly discernible from night, like the gloom of Egypt's plague, but still, taking things as a whole, day

and night have divided time between them. The ordinances of Heaven have continued with us as with our fathers. No student of Nature can doubt that to this hour, despite occasional extremes of heat and cold, the seasons are unchanged and, notwithstanding occasional absence of sunshine and diminution of light, day and night have followed the diurnal revolution of the earth. Since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were. One great interruption occurred at the deluge, but the Lord has kept His promise to prevent any other.

So long-continued is the fulfillment of this promise that even this race of unbelievers has come to believe in it. We look for the seasons as a matter of course. I do not suppose that anyone in this audience doubts the coming of spring. The limbs are bare, the buds are not eager for their bursting, the crocus and the daffodil are afraid to show themselves–but yet the birds believe in the coming spring, for I hear them in sweet chorus every morning singing their songs of expectancy! Brothers and Sisters, you are also expectant. Long observation has begotten in you an unwavering faith. When the sun goes down at night, not even a little child fears that God has blown out the sun and that the great candle will never be lighted again! No, we look for the morning! When winter has chilled us a while, we look for the spring and the summer. And when summer has browned our faces, we expect the falling of the leaf and the descent of the snow!

I want you to ask yourselves–Why do we not believe God's other promises? Why have we not as solid a conviction of the Truth of God in other statements which our God has made as we have upon this point? Is it that we have experience in this case? O Brothers and Sisters, we have had experience concerning other matters, also! If we were to deal with the weather with the same short-sighted doubt which governs us in our thoughts of Divine Providence, we might be doubtful about summer and winter! We might say, "It really does not look very likely that spring will come. Look at our meadows and mark how the cold has literally burned the grass! Look how many of our hardy evergreens are dead and others sadly cut to pieces–look what mischief the cold has worked. Will there ever be leaf and flower again? Is it possible that I shall ever wipe the sweat from my smoking brow on some blazing noontide? Can these frozen brooks leap into liberty? Today we crowd around the fire, hardly keeping ourselves alive from the bitter cold–shall we yet bask in the hay field, or fan ourselves amid the golden sheaves?" Had we less experience, it would seem highly improbable. Yet we enjoy a full assurance as to the revolution of the seasons and the succession of day and night, do we not? Why this assurance of one promise and why such frequent distrust of others equally true?

When God's promises appear to be difficult of fulfillment, why do we doubt them? They are fulfilled in due season–which of them

has ever failed? They come to pass without difficulty–why should we suspect them? When deliverance looks as though it could not come, it is, none the less, sure, for the Lord has promised it. The absence of visible means need not enter into the account–He who is Almighty God has infinite resources!

So, too, dear Friends, we have to remember that if the Lord, Himself, does not send spring and summer, we cannot create either of them. Here we are out of the field. When the sun goes down, if the Lord did not cause it to rise again, we could not open the doors of the morning. I love to get into the field of Nature on a large scale, for there one is rid of man and the Lord, alone, is seen working all things according to His will. The heavens and their ordinances know no Presence and Power but God alone. As far as we are concerned, we cannot lift a finger to change the seasons. What could all our Parliament–King, Lords and Commons–do with all their Acts towards bringing on springtime or hastening summer and harvest? Nothing at all! These matters are out of man's power and yet they are none the less sure! So, my Brothers and Sisters, when you get into such a condition that you can, by no means, help yourself, you are not, therefore, to doubt that God can achieve His purpose and fulfill His promise without your help! When has He asked your aid? Good men have gone very wrong when they have thought of aiding in the fulfillment of promises and prophecies. See how Rebecca erred in trying to get the promised blessing for Jacob!

We had better leave the Lord's decrees in the Lord's hands. When any case comes to its worst and you can do nothing whatever in it, you may safely stand still and see the salvation of God! At this hour you feel sure that springtime and summer will come, though you cannot move the sun an inch beyond his predestinated course. Be as much at ease about the other promises of God as you are concerning the cycle of the year.

Remember, also, that every coming of summer–yes, and every rising of the sun–is a great wonder. Only our familiarity leads us to think of these things without marveling. A real miracle is every break of day and every sunset! A world of wonders bursts forth in every springtide! Each blade of grass and ear of corn is a display of Divine Omnipotence! We are surrounded with works of almighty power and goodness from morn till eve and through the watches of the night! From the first day of the year until its close, the Lord is about us. Unseen by us, His hands propel the silent spheres which no force within human calculation could move in their orbits. That same Power sustains and animates and perfects all things. God is in all and in all wonderful! If God continues, thus, to work the pleasing changes of the year as He promised to do, why do you doubt Him concerning other things, O you of little faith? Will He not keep His Word to His children if He keeps it to the earth? Will He not fulfill His every promise to His own elect if He is true to sun and stars? Seedtime and harvest, summer and winter have

come according to His Word without our aid and, amazing as these changes are, they have never failed! And will the Lord forget in other things? Will He forswear His Covenant and deny His promise to His Only Begotten? God forbid!

Brothers and Sisters, we have come not only to believe this promise as to the seasons and to be quite sure about it, but we practically act upon our faith. The farmers have sown their autumn wheat and many of them are longing for an opportunity to sow their spring wheat–and what is sowing but a burial of good store? Why do farmers hide their grain in the earth? Because they feel sure that seedtime will, in due time, be followed by harvest! They put their grain into the ground hoping to receive it, again, multiplied a hundredfold! Why do we not act in an equally practical style in reference to the rest of God's promises? True faith makes the promises of God to be of full effect by viewing them as true and putting them to the test. When faith asks of God, it believes that it has the petition which it has asked of Him. Many prepare their thinner garments in prospect of warm weather, or, at the close of summer, provide household flannels for the winter because they reckon upon the season. Why do we not, also, prepare ourselves to receive the Lord's blessing in the time appointed? Why do we not reckon upon every Word of Scripture being fulfilled? We ought to take the promises into our matter-of-fact estimate and act accordingly.

Let me go further–If a man did not act upon the declaration of God in our text, he would be counted foolish. Suppose a man said, "I do not feel sure that there will come a harvest and, therefore, I shall not sow"? His neighbors would look upon his uncultivated fields and reckon him out of his mind! If another should say, "I shall lay by no stores for the winter because I believe that we have arrived at perpetual summer, wherein there will always be corn in the sheaf and fruit on the trees," we would regard him as fit for a lunatic asylum! Equally mad are they who treat other promises of God as if they were idle words, no more worthy of notice than the prophecies of a charlatan. The masses of our fellow men never search the Word of God to find a promise suitable to their cases and, even if such a promise were laid before them, they would only regard it as a matter of imagination or meaningless jargon. What shall I say of those who thus trifle with eternal Truths of God but that madness has carried away the heart of man? What God has promised ought to be a clear indication to us of the future and a hint as to how we should act! Let us act in faith upon the Divine promise. If the Lord says, "Seek you, My face," take care that you seek His face. If He says, "Ask, and it shall be given you," be sure to ask and expect to receive! If the Lord promises pardon to those who believe on His Son, let us believe on His Son and receive mercy! He keeps His Covenant with day and night. Let us, therefore, believe that He will keep His Covenant with us and do

even as He has said. Oh that this lesson, simple as it is, may be learnt by every Believer and by every unbeliever, too!

Let me close this point by noticing that whether men believe this or not, it will stand true. A man says there will be no winter and provides no garments–he will shiver in the northern blast all the same when December covers the earth with snow! An unbeliever declares that there will be no summer and, therefore, he will not sow nor prepare a barn. Will his foolish skepticism prevent the coming of harvest, miserable farmer that he is? He will secure a harvest of thorns and thistles to reward his own practical unbelief, but a harvest will come to the rest of the land to his confusion! The year will go on in spite of whomever plays the fool! So, too, will the sun rise, regardless of whomever prophesies an endless night! God's purpose and God's promise will stand fast though the hills are removed! If you believe in the Lord Jesus, you shall be saved, but if you believe not, you must perish! In either case, the Law of God will not change for you. God's great Laws in the spiritual world hold good with a certainty as great as those which govern the natural world.

We cannot suspend the force of gravitation, but if we could, we would not, even then, be able to change the veracity of the Most High, who must be true so long as He is God. Has He said and shall He not do it? Yes, that He shall! Though we believe not, He abides faithful–He cannot deny Himself–therefore, you sons of men, be

wise and take heed to the Word of the Lord. As in the summer you prepare yourselves for winter. And as at springtime you sow your seed that you may gather your harvest in the summer and thus you obey the voice of God in Nature, I pray you, also, have respect to that Voice as it speaks in the pages of His Book–and shape your conduct by that which the Lord has revealed.

III. There is also in the text, I think, A SUGGESTION OF ANALOGIES. Reading these words, not as a philosophical prediction, but as a part of the Word of God, I see in them a moral, spiritual and mystical meaning. Holy Scripture is intended not to teach us natural, but spiritual things. I conclude, therefore, that there is an analogy here well worthy of being worked out. May the good Spirit guide us in it!

While the earth remains there will be changes in the spiritual world. Read the text laying a stress upon the words of change and see how it rises and falls like the waves of the sea–"While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." Not one of these states continues–it comes and goes. The seasons are a perpetual procession, an endless chain, an ever-moving wheel. Cold flies before heat and soon summer is chased away by winter. Nothing is stable. Such is this life–such are the feelings of spiritual life with most men! Such is the history of the Church of God! We sorrow and we rejoice. We struggle and we triumph. We labor and we rest.

We are not long upon Tabor, neither are we always in the valley of Baca. Let us not be amazed, as though some strange thing happened to us, if our day darkens into night, or our summer chills into winter! From joy to sorrow, from sorrow to joy, from success to defeat, from defeat to success, we pass very rapidly. It is so–it will be so while the earth remains and we remain partakers of the earth.

Yet, there will be an order in it all. Cold and heat, summer and winter and day and night do not come in a giddy dance or tumultuous hurry-burly, but they make up the fair and beautiful year. Chance has no part in these affairs! God compels winds, storms, sun and sea to keep the order of His house, and none rebels against His command. So in the spiritual kingdom, in the life of the Believer and in the history of the Church of God, all things are made to work for good and the spiritual is being educated into the heavenly. In our seasons there is an order visible to God, even when we walk in darkness and see no light. We have our winters in which the sap is prepared in secret to produce the clusters of summer. We have our colds, in which we lose the superfluities bred of our heat. Expect the changes and believe that they come by rule!

Great rules will stand while the earth abides, in the spiritual as well as in the natural world. For instance, there will be seedtime and harvest, effort and result, labor and success. There will be to you, dear Brothers and Sisters, a time in which you will chiefly

have to receive–it is your seedtime and God is sowing you, by instruction and sanctification, in order that in due time you may yield Him a harvest to His Glory. Sometimes we lie passive, like the plowed fields, and then our Divine Sower casts into us the living seed. But soon other days arrive, when we are active and yield unto God the results of His Grace experienced in former days. It ought to be so. To you, beloved workers in the Mission Hall, or the Sunday school, there will be a time of sowing. Not much may be accomplished though a great deal of effort may be put forth. To me in preaching there are times for sowing and nothing else but sowing–few seem to be the green blades which spring up around me. Perhaps a year may intervene before the worker shall see any reward for his toil–"The farmer waits for the precious fruits of the earth." The missionary upon his district, the Bible-woman on her rounds may see no manifest effect produced by daily teaching–but harvest and seedtime are tied together in a sure knot! "He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Brothers and Sisters, believe that and be of good cheer! "Your labor is not in vain in the Lord." While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest will take, each one, its turn.

So, too, while the earth remains, there will be the interchanges of cold and heat. Where there is life there must be change! Only in death is there monotony. There will be times in your experience

when you will feel the awful withering of that convicting Spirit who dries up the Glory of the flesh. “Who can stand before His cold?” Soon there will be a melting season of contrition and repentance and then the Holy Spirit will have warmed your heart into hope and faith and love and joy and delight in God! Cold and heat come to the Church. I have oftentimes noticed her bitter cold and I have cried to God about it. But the heat has come–we have felt the glow of revival–enthusiasm has been kindled, zeal has abounded! I wish we could always keep at one glorious summer heat, walking in the Light of God as God is in the Light. It ought to be so with us. Some of us labor to be always zealous and full of fire, but should times come when we, or others, are not in the fullness of the blessing, we will not despair–we will rather cry mightily unto the Lord to send His Word and cause the waters of His Grace to flow–and make our winter to be over and gone while flowers appear on the earth and the time of the singing of birds comes!

So, too, have I seen in our mortal life, summer and winter, prosperity and adversity. Do not expect, dear Brothers and Sisters, while you are in this world, to always dwell among the lilies and roses of prosperity. Summer will come and you will be wise to make hay while the sun shines by using all opportunities for usefulness–but look for winter. I do not know into what trade you can enter to be secure against losses, nor what profession you could

follow in which you would escape disappointments. I know no corner of the earth without its night, no land without its stones, no sea without its storms. As to spiritual and mental experience, it seems to me within myself that while the earth remains I shall have my ebbs and flows, my rising and my sinking. Do not, therefore, begin to kick and quarrel with the dispensations of God's Providence. When it is summer, say, "The Lord gave and blessed be His name." When it is winter say, "The Lord has taken away and blessed be His name." Keep to the same music, even though you sometimes have to pitch an octave lower! Still praise and magnify the Lord whether you are sowing or reaping. Let Him do what seems good to Him, but to you let it always seem good to praise!

Beloved, labor will be followed by rest, for while the earth remains there will be day and night. In the day man goes forth to his labor. At night he lies down. Let him bless God for both. There comes a night wherein no man can work–to us this is not dreaded, but expected! I do not know for which I thank God the more, for day or for night. Our young people praise God for day, with its activities, but we, who are older, are more inclined to bless the Lord for night, with its repose. The gray beard, the man of many years and sad experiences, looks forward to that night wherein the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. If we regard death as night, we look forward to an endless day which will follow on–when the sun shall go no more down forever! Jesus our Lord is

the Sun of that glorious country to which we wend our way! While the earth remains, there will continually be a variety of benedictions, a change ringing upon the silver bells of mercy. When you are on high, my Brothers and Sisters, remember you must descend–and when you are cast down, expect a cheerful lifting up! When it is broad day, let us travel swiftly, for night comes on. But when it is dark, let us watch hopefully, for the morning comes. As sojourners in a changeful country, let us spend the days of our pilgrimage in a holy fear which shall preserve us from love of the world. I need not further work out the analogies of the text–many more will rise before the meditative mind.

IV. Last of all, I want you to regard my text AS A TOKEN FOR THE ASSURANCE OF OUR FAITH. "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." And they do not. In this fact we are bid to see the seal and token of the Covenant. Look at the passage we read this morning in the 33 rd Chapter of Jeremiah. Here is the security of the King in whom we rejoice. "If you can break My Covenant of theday, and My Covenant of the night, then shall David not have a son to reign upon his throne." God has promised never to change the royal line, but while the earth remains and day and night are seen, the Son of David shall reign King of kings and Lord of lords! Until all enemies are under His feet, He must reign. So, then, as I wrap my garment about me,

feeling the cold of winter, I will say to myself, “God has, by sending cold, confirmed His Covenant with Jesus, our Lord and King.” Every morning light salutes my eyes and declares that “His name shall be continued as long as the sun.” And when the shades of evening fall and the stars look forth from their houses, I hear a sound of “abundance of peace so long as the moon endures.” His dominion is an everlasting dominion and of His Kingdom there is no end! The Lord Jesus is King in Zion and Head over all things to His Church while the earth remains!

The abiding of the ordinances of Heaven is equally a token of the continuance of the priesthood. Under the type of the tribe of Levi, the priesthood is vested in the Person of our Lord. He is our Melchizedek, who is Priest as well as King and of His Priesthood there is no end. While winter chills and summer burns, while day calls to labor and night to rest, our great High Priest abides in His office, still able to cleanse us, to make intercession for us and to present our offerings unto God. His one Sacrifice is perpetually a sweet savor unto God and shall be till moons shall wax and wane no more. As I tread the soil which seems frozen into iron and as I shiver in the bitter northeast wind, I say to myself, “The Priesthood of our Lord abides, for cold has not ceased to visit us and heat will come in its appointed months.” As I go to my bed, or as I rise from it, day and night are to me a pledge that the Lord Jesus is a Priest forever according to the Law of an endless life.

A third thing was also assured by the same token. The Lord said that as long as His Covenant with day and night remained He would not put away the seed of Abraham. Since a son of David must rule them, they must exist to be ruled. There will forever be a chosen people–a people for whom Jesus lives as King and Priest. The Lord has not cast away the people whom He did foreknow, nor will He do so, come what may. While seedtime and harvest, cold and heat abide, the Lord will maintain a Church, against which the gates of Hell shall not prevail! What a mercy is this! Alas, men whom I hoped were faithful have turned aside from the Truth of God. Ministers who were regarded as pillars have fallen and persons esteemed to be saints turned out to be hypocrites. Yet, "there is a remnant according to the election of Grace." The Lord has a reserve of men who have not bowed the knee to Baal! Therefore, let us be of good courage and never tremble for the Ark of the Lord.

To end all, let our prayer be that the Lord would abide with us and then the heat shall not smite us, nor the cold molest us. The Presence of God makes fair weather! Let us sing with quaint John Ryland–

"Rise then, Sun of Righteousness,
Me with Your sweet beams bless!
Winter then may stay or flee,
Lord, 'tis all alike to me."

Oh, you that know not our God, I feel heartily sorry for you! To you all seasons must be blank, for God is not in them. Oh that you knew Jesus! The world is a bleak house, a chill and empty corridor without God! And men are orphans, life is hopeless and death is starless night if Jesus is not known and loved! He who trusts his soul with Jesus has found the key of the great secret, the clue of the maze! He sees in all that smiles or rages around him in our changeful weather, pledges of the love of the Father, tokens of the Grace of the Son and witnesses of the work of the Holy Spirit! To the one God be Glory forever! Amen.

Ge 9:16 • The Rainbow

SERMON 0517

T*he Rainbow*

"And the bow shall be in the cloud and I will look upon it, that I may remember the Everlasting Covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."

Genesis 9:16

THE story of Noah's preservation in the ark is a suggestive representation of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. It is, we think, especially intended to depict that part of our salvation which lies in the washing of regeneration. In the same way as Baptism is the outward symbol of regeneration, so also is the ark, "wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." The ark was immersed in

those dreadful rains and awful waterfalls which deluged the earth, and Noah's family were buried in that ark to all the world.

But by this burial they were floated out of the old condemned world into the new world of life and Divine Grace. Death to the world and burial in the ark were the means of their safety. "The like figure whereunto," says the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 3:21), "even Baptism does also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Baptism is a most significant picture of regeneration, but it is in no sense the cause of the new birth. And the blunder of the Puseyites lies in considering the outward manifestation of an accomplished fact, as though it were the means of creating that fact.

Baptism saves no one, except, as Peter says, in figure. But as a figure, it is eminently full of Divine teaching, for it sets forth the great Truth of God that the Believer, standing today in the old world, is buried to that world, "buried with Jesus Christ by Baptism into death." And his rising from the liquid tomb is the figure of his resurrection in Christ, into a new world, as a new man, "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Would to God that we thought more of being dead with Christ, buried with Him and risen with Him. Brethren, let Noah in his ark preach the work of righteousness within the heart to all of us this morning.

Do you not think, dear Friends, that the history of Noah, when he left the ark, in all its items, may be viewed as typical and instructive? Noah came out of the ark no longer cooped up and penned within its narrow limits. He walked abroad and the whole world was before him where to choose. Was not that a picture of the freedom of the Believer who has been "buried with Christ," and enjoys the possession of God's free Spirit? For him there is no spirit of bondage, he is free as a child in his father's house. All things are his, by gift of God, to use and to enjoy. He has learned the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free, and if the Son make us free, we are free, indeed.

When Noah slew the bullock and the other clean beasts and offered them upon the altar, did he not show forth the Believer's employment? We also offer acceptable sacrifices of prayer and praise unto God, and we, ourselves, are living sacrifices unto God. Did he not as much say to all generations of saints, "You being thus delivered from a death which you deserve, are to spend your lives as priests unto your God"? When the Lord was pleased on that day to bless Noah and his family, bidding them be fruitful, did He not therein set forth the fruitfulness which belongs unto Believers, so that, abiding in Christ, they "bring forth much fruit"? May not that benediction teach us how earnestly we should seek to be spiritually the parents of immortal souls, travailing in birth till Christ is formed in them?

When the Divine Father gave them dominion over the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and over all cattle, did not this portray the power which Believers have over lust, and sin, and evil? And did it not prophesy the subjugation of all things by the power of their faith, so that they who become "priests," in sacrifice, become also "kings," by virtue of the charter of dominion which the heavenly Father bestows upon them? What do you think, Brothers and Sisters? When He enlarged the grant of food, and permitted them to eat flesh, did He not set forth that food on which true Believers feed, who now eat His flesh and drink His blood who has become the spiritual Food of our souls?

Is it straining the allegory, is it carrying it too far, if I close this spiritualizing by observing that the very same security which God then gave to Noah and his descendants is that security under which we stand? He gave them a Covenant–a Covenant embellished with a Divine symbol and ratified with His own signature written out in all the colors of beauty. We, too, stand under a Covenant which has its own faithful witness in Heaven, more transcendently illustrious and beautiful than the rainbow–the Person of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Leaving, however, all those points, which I have only started to excite thought among you, we come to this: we have Scriptural reason for asserting that this venerable Covenant–that the world shall no more be destroyed by a flood–is typical of a yet more ancient compact which God made with Christ. That being that He

would be unto His people a God, and they should be His chosen ones, world without end. In the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, (vv. 8-10), we find such language as this–"In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment. But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with you, nor rebuke you.

"For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed. But My kindness shall not depart from you; neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you." The covenant of Noah, then, is typical of the great Everlasting Covenant made with Christ on behalf of His people. And the rainbow, as the symbol of the Covenant with Noah, is typical of our Lord Jesus, who is the Lord's witness to the people. You read in the fourth chapter of the book of Revelation, in the third verse, "there was a rainbow round about the Throne," showing that the bow is not a temporary symbol for earth only, but is a symbol of everlasting and heavenly things.

And in the tenth chapter of the book of Revelation, if I mistake not, in the first verse, you will find that the mighty angel with a little book in his right hand, who shall put one foot upon the sea and another upon the land, is described as having his head crowned with a rainbow. In this place, our Lord Jesus Christ, in His

mediatorial capacity, wears the symbol of the Covenant about His brow. And in the other passage our Lord, as King, is represented as sitting upon the Throne, surrounded with the insignia of the Covenant of Grace which encompasses the Throne, so that there are no goings forth of His majesty and His power and His Grace, except in a covenant way and after a covenant sort, since the rainbow must be passed before the bright rays of His power and love can reach the sons of men.

This brings us now into the center of our discourse. We have to talk of two things–first, the tenor of the Covenant and secondly, the token of it–running a parallel all the way through between the two Covenants. The tenor of Noah's Covenant is the tenor of the Covenant of Grace (Everlasting Covenant)–just as the rainbow represents, and in some sense is, the token of the Covenant of Grace, also.

First, then, the Covenant itself–WHAT IS ITS TENOR? We reply, that it is a Covenant of pure Grace. There was nothing in Noah why God should make a covenant with him. He was a sinner–and proved himself to be so in a most shocking manner within a few days. He needed a sacrifice, for he afterwards became drunk. He was one of the best of men. But the best of men are but men at the best, and can have no claim upon the favor of God. He was saved by faith as the rest of us must be–and faith, we all know, is inconsistent with any claim of merit. At least one of his sons we

must set down as being an open and abandoned sinner, and in him there could have been no ground why God should make a covenant with him.

We have no reason to imagine that Noah ever sought this Covenant. He did offer a sacrifice. But we do not know that he ventured to indulge the idea that God would enter into bonds with him not to destroy the earth. We imagine that the very first cloud which swept across the sky would excite the Patriarch's alarm. The first drop which fell would dampen his comfort. As a preacher of righteousness he understood well enough that on grounds of justice he had no claim upon the Most Holy God, and he would not venture to plead any merit of his own. But out of pure favor–just as out of the mountain's side the sparkling fountain gushes freely without the labor of man, so this Covenant of sparing mercy sprang spontaneously from the overflowing, ever bounteous, and loving heart of God.

Certainly it is so with that greater Covenant, whereof we strive to speak. For this was made with Christ, "or ever the earth was." And as there were no men to supplicate, it could not have been possible that it was due to their intercession. As there were no men to merit anything, it could not be bought by their worthiness. Divine foreknowledge well knew that man would be evil–"only evil and that continually from his youth up," so no foresight of human goodness could have suggested it. And yet, because He, "will have

mercy on whom He will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom He will have compassion," He, our gracious God, whose heart was swelling like the deep sea with floodtides of loving kindness, was pleased to strike hands with Christ, our Covenant and Federal Head. And from Grace, and Grace, alone, He entered into engagements with Christ on our account.

The Everlasting Covenant, we note, in the next place, was all of promise. You will be struck, if you read these verses, how it runs over and over again, "I establish." "It shall come to pass." "I will." "It shall." "I will." He who knows the difference between, "you shall," and "I will," is a good theologian. The old Covenant of Works is, "you shall." "You shall not commit adultery. You shall not kill. You shall not steal." Death always comes to us by that Covenant of Command. But the new Covenant is, "I will," and life comes to us by its promises. The Covenant of Grace runs on this wise–"I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean. From all your iniquities will I save you." If there is a, "you shall," it is not by way of command, but by way of promise.

"I will," and "you shall"! O dear Friends, one's heart rejoices to think of those potent shalls and wills–those immoveable pillars which death and Hell cannot shake–the shalls and wills of a God who, "speaks and it is done." God who, "commands and it stands fast." I do not see an if, nor a but, nor the shadow of a perhaps in it. It is all, "I will, I will, I will," from beginning to end. And so when

God covenanted with Christ, it was not, “I will save My people if they do this,” but, “I will,” and, “they shall,” from first to last–

“It is like a living spring of waters, sweet and clear.
There’s not an if to foul the stream nor a perhaps here.
Grace is its fountainhead, the source from where it came–
In wills and shalls of Gospel Grace, eternally the same.”

The Apostle Paul is very clear upon this. In that most blessed Epistle to the Galatians he calls this, “the Covenant of Promise,” and marks the difference between Ishmael, “the son of the bondwoman,” according to nature and according to works, and Isaac, “who is the child of the promise and the gift of God, above nature: not according to the efficacy and energy of the creature, but according to the will and power and truthfulness of the Most High.” You and I do not stand today under a Covenant which demands anything of us. Unconditional favors, unlimited mercies made sure to all the seed by the oath and promise–the shall and will of God!

Further, I would have you observe that this Covenant has up to now been faithfully kept. It cheered my heart, when thinking this matter over, to remember that although I depend upon covenant faithfulness, I am not alone in that dependence. Every living thing upon the face of the earth lives by virtue of the Everlasting Covenant of God. Covenant engagements preserve the world from flood–were it not for that Covenant, the tops of the mountains

might be covered tomorrow. A covenant tenure is a very sure one, seeing that these thousands of years the world has never been destroyed by a flood. Go back to ancient histories and see whether the deluge God has ever again swept away the race of man with water, and you shall not even dare to hint that such a thing has been.

No, the earth standing in the water and out of the water, since the fathers fell asleep, according to the testimony of scoffers themselves, abides still the same. And so does the Covenant of Grace. It has never been removed or altered, nor have its promises been broken. O Saint, you dwell in tabernacles which shall never be taken down! God has never failed His people, nor cast away His chosen. Not one promise has lost its fulfillment, nor one word its faithfulness–

"This Covenant of Grace all blessings secures.
Believer, rejoice, for all things are yours,
And God from His purpose shall never remove,
But love you and bless you and rest in His love."

Beloved, there is this about Noah's Covenant and about the Covenant of Grace–they do not depend in any degree at all upon man. For, if you will notice, the bow is put in the cloud, but it does not say, "And when you shall look upon the bow, and you shall remember My Covenant, then I will not destroy the earth." No, it is gloriously put, not upon our memory, which is fickle and frail, but

upon God's memory, which is infinite and immutable! "The bow shall be in the cloud. And I will look upon it, that I may remember the Everlasting Covenant." Oh, it is not my remembering God–it is God's remembering me! It is not my laying hold of His Covenant, but His Covenant laying hold on me! Glory be to God, the whole of the bulwarks are secured, and even the minor towers which we may fancy might have been left to man, are guarded by Divine strength!

Even the remembrance of the Covenant is not left to our memories, for we might forget–but our Lord cannot, will not forget the Saints–whom He has inscribed on the palms of His hands. It is with us today as it was with Israel in Egypt. The blood was upon the lintel and upon the two side posts. But God did not say, "When you see the blood I will pass over you." No, no, "When I see the blood I will pass over you." My looking to Jesus brings me joy and peace, but it is God's looking to Jesus which secures my salvation, and that of all His elect.

It is impossible for our God to look at Christ, our bleeding Surety, and then to be angry with us for sins already punished in Him. No, dear Friends, it is not left with us even to be saved by remembering the Covenant. There's no linseywoolsey here–not a single thread of the creature mars the fabric. Here we have the pure gold, and not an atom of alloy. It is not of man, neither by man, but of the Lord alone. We should remember the Covenant and we shall do it,

through Divine Grace. But the hinge of the matter does not lie there. It is God's remembering us, not our remembering Him.

And therefore, for all these reasons it is an Everlasting Covenant. We know that as long as there is day and night, and summer and winter, and these shall be so long as the earth stands, the proud waves can never cover the earth. Forever has God established this Covenant in Heaven. Even so, the Everlasting Covenant is not intended to be fleeting and temporary. "Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven." "He has made with us an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure." "He will ever be mindful of His Covenant." If it concerns you today, it is, "the same yesterday, today, and forever." If the Covenant blesses you at this hour, it shall bless you in old age, in the time of death, at resurrection and throughout eternity.

No time can change one of its stipulations. You may walk the centuries and fly adown the ages far into eternity, but you can never discover such a thing as the change or failure of one single article of the Covenant of Grace. Its jots and tittles are sure to all the seed–

"He loved the world of His elect,
With love surpassing thought.
Nor will His mercy ever neglect
The souls His Son has bought.
The warm affections of His breast
Towards His chosen burn,

And in this love He'll ever rest
Nor from His oath return.
Still to confirm His oath of old,
See in the heavens His bow,
No fierce rebukes, but love untold,
Awaits His children now."

Would to God you and I studied more the doctrine of this Everlasting Covenant. Our old Puritan forefathers were accustomed to preach much about it. Those Scotch Theologians, who were a second band of Puritans, Erskine and the men of his day, were always dwelling upon the Covenants. Good Witsius has left us a marvelously learned and potent treatise on the same, and Fisher's Marrow of Theology is a valuable exposition of the matter. He who studies the doctrines of the Covenants is not very likely to make a mingle-mangle of his ministry, or to preach a yes and no Gospel.

My dear Friends, when you think of the Covenant of Law and the Covenant of Grace, and remember that they are contrary the one to the other, and can never mingle, can never be united–so that the one can dilute the other–it must come out forcibly before you that we may address the Gospel to the sinner as a sinner, without a fitness on his part. We may still believe in God's love to the Saint, even though he has sinned and that notwithstanding all the misbehavior of any of the chosen people. Since they are under the Covenant of Grace and not of works, their salvation is never in

jeopardy, never at hazard, so far as God's will and God's power are concerned.

He that vowed to save them, and loved them in Christ, and has given them faith, which is the token of His Grace, will most assuredly save them and bring them to glory. The earth shall be destroyed, with water, long before one of God's elect shall be damned. It shall be destroyed with fire, we know, but when, "the mountains depart," and, "the hills are removed," the Covenant of His Grace shall still stand. And He will be mindful of all who have an interest in it.

So much, then, concerning the tenor of the Everlasting Covenant itself. My Soul, search, and look, and see whether you have an interest in that Covenant. Can you say from your heart–

"My hope is fixed on nothing less

Than Jesus' blood and righteousness"?

Then, my Soul, that Everlasting Covenant is yours and you are safe beyond risk of harm!

II. Secondly, THE TOKEN OF THE COVENANT. The Covenant needs no token, as far as God is concerned. Tokens are given for us, because of our littleness of heart, our unbelief, our constant forgetfulness of God's promises. The rainbow is the symbol of Noah's Covenant. And Jesus Christ, who is the Covenant, is also the symbol of that Covenant to us. He is the Faithful Witness in Heaven.

Briefly upon this part of the subject let us notice when we may expect to see the token of the Everlasting Covenant. The rainbow is only to be seen painted upon a cloud. Expect no tokens, except when you need them. The Lord Jesus, when He can, will trust us to our faith. For it is, on the whole, more healthy, more strengthening to us, to, "walk by faith and not by sight." Tokens are helps for our childhood–they would be unnecessary to us were we men. Tokens, to men whose faith is in vigorous order, would be as crutches to a man who is not lame, or as glasses to those whose eyes are perfect. The Lord is pleased to give tokens when tokens are wanted, I say.

And therefore He gives them, as He gives rainbows, when there is a cloud. When the greatest cloud which ever gathered upon earth had covered Calvary with blackness. When the sun himself had suffered eclipse. When human sin and Divine wrath had made a tempest so black and terrible that all the earth was in affright–then on that black cloud was painted the rainbow–for Jesus was lifted up and amidst that thick darkness. He, the Expiation and the Atonement, offered up Himself, and poured forth His blood.

When the sinner's conscience is dark with clouds. When he remembers his past sins. When he mourns and laments before God, Jesus Christ is revealed to him as the Covenant Rainbow, speaking peace. And to the Believer, when his trials surround him. When temptations beset him. When he suffers depression of spirits–then how sweet it is to behold the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ! To

see Him bleeding for us, offered up for guilty men–God's Rainbow, hung over the cloud of all our sins, our sorrows and our woes. Look, Believer, when you have a cloud–look for a Token, and be not satisfied without it. The ancient Church said upon one occasion, "We see not our signs." And you and I have sometimes to say the same. But let us hasten to the Rock of our salvation and beseech Him to bestow upon us a comfortable sight of Jesus, who shall will the Covenant to our souls again.

Nor does a cloud alone give a rainbow. There must be rain. There can be no rainbows, unless there are the crystal drops to reflect the light of the sun. So, Beloved, our sorrows must not only threaten, but they must really fall upon us. There had been no Christ for us if the vengeance of God had been merely a threat. It must fall in terrible drops upon Him. Christ, who sets forth to us the vengeance and the love of God at the same time, had not come to us unless there had been a real vengeance and a real punishment of sin–until there is a real anguish in the sinner's conscience, there is no Christ for him. And until the chastisement which you feel becomes grievous to you–till the big drops bespatter you, and you feel it is not a threat, but a real infliction of sorrow upon you, you cannot expect to see Jesus Christ.

Perhaps, dear Brothers and Sisters, some of us have but slight views of Christ, and few have visits from Him because we have so few troubles. And the reason why most Saints in these days do not

live so near to Jesus as they were custom to do in the centuries gone by may be because we have not so many of those showers of persecution which fell at that season. Why, when, in the reign of Dioclesius and in the preceding centuries, Believers were stoned and dragged into the amphitheatre, or hacked to death with knives! They saw the glory of Jesus as the rainbow painted on the black cloud of persecution, while the raindrops fell upon them. It makes us even long to suffer as they suffered, that we may behold Jesus as they beheld Him.

But the day is coming when the world shall, “hear of wars and rumors of wars.” The earth shall rock and reel and the pillars of Heaven shall be shaken. The stars shall fall, the moon shall be turned into a clot of blood, and the sun shall be black as sackcloth of hair. Ah, then how glorious will that Rainbow shine to all the people of God, when over the conflagrations of earth, and the destruction of men, and the melting of empires, and the blazing of earth, there shall be seen Christ the Mediator, securing all His people and ratifying, still, the Everlasting Covenant! There must be drops of rain, or else no rainbow. Some failings of vengeance, or else no sight of Christ.

But then, there must be a sun. For clouds and drops of rain make not rainbows, unless the sun shines. Beloved, our God, who is as the Sun to us, always shines. But we do not always see Him. Clouds hide His face. But no matter what drops may be falling, or

what clouds may be present, if He does but shine, there will be a Rainbow at once. When the blessed Spirit, “sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts”–when we can say, “Abba, Father,” and a Father’s love and a Father’s peace are breathed upon us–then we see Jesus Christ, beholding the Father in the Person of His Son.

It is said that when we see the rainbow, that particular shower is over. So good Bishop Hall tells us in his, “Contemplations.” Certain it is, that when Christ comes, our troubles are over. When we behold Jesus, our sins are gone–our doubts and fears subside at His command. When He walks the waters of the sea, there will be a calm. But others say that the rainbow is the showery arch and heralds bad weather. And probably this is quite as true. Certainly, whenever you get a love token from Christ, you may expect some trouble. For He brings His people into the banqueting house either before a battle, or after it. Melchisedek came to meet Abraham when the kings had all been slaughtered. But sometimes our Melchisedek brings the bread and wine just before the battle is to commence.

We are not always to be living upon love-tokens. Our beloved Jesus would rather make us live by simple faith, and therefore we, “walk in darkness and see no light.” Still, rainbows are delightful sights, and a vision of Jesus is rapturous and transporting. But we cannot expect to see Him, I say, unless it is when the storm is over or when another storm is coming on, or when the cloud is there, or

the drops are falling, or the light of God's countenance is especially shining upon you. We will say no more about when this token is seen, but we will now notice briefly, what this token is.

What do we see in our Covenant Witness in Heaven? We see in Him what we see in the rainbow. In the rainbow we see supreme Glory and beauty. As one of the works of God, it is worthy to be sought out by them that have pleasure in them. One might stand and gaze on the rainbow with wonder and admiration and never be weary. I do not know whether you have noticed paintings of rainbows–did you ever see a good one? Will you ever see a good one? There are one or two in the Royal Academy this year–I am no judge of paintings, but I can judge that they are as much unlike rainbows as they well could be.

Rainbows cannot be painted. The thing is impossible. There is such a melting and blending of colors, that human art shall never be able to rival the art of God. The Master Painter, with the black cloud for His palette, and the sun's rays for His brush, paints so that no artist shall rival Him. If you could gather together a heap of all the glittering gems and jewels which adorn an Oriental prince, and build a glorious arch–you could not make such glitter and brightness of glory as in the rainbow–which is the simple work of a drop of rain and a ray of light. But shall I compare my Lord Jesus to the rainbow? I do Him an injustice–

"All human beauties, all Divine, in my Beloved meet and shine."

You never saw a picture of His face which satisfied you, and you never will. You shall go all over the Continent and see some of the marvelous productions of the masters put up as altar pieces. And you will say when you see them, “That is not like Jesus Christ.” They can paint Judas. There are some fine heads of Peter–sweet guesses at John–John the Baptist to life–all but that little bit of a cockleshell in his hand. They can paint Mary Magdalene if you will, but never Jesus Christ. They can never paint Him. No artist that ever lived can catch His expression or countenance, much less put it on canvas. And as to the beauty of His Character, must we not burst out with the spouse in the Canticles, “He is altogether lovely”?–

“The spacious earth, the swelling flood,
Proclaim the wise and powerful God.
And Your rich glories from afar,
Sparkle in every rolling star,
But in His looks a glory stands,
The noble labor of Your hands–
God, in the Person of His Son,
Has all His mightiest works outdone.”

The rainbow has been recognized by ancient poets and bards as an appointed messenger of God. Homer calls it the messenger of the gods, and the old mythologies speak of it as the Iris, the messenger of Juno. They knew not who had sent it, nor what was

the errand on which it came. Still they recognized it as a Divine ambassador. And surely such is Christ, the Messenger of the Covenant whom we delight in. God's great Ambassador, who is, "our peace," "the desire of all nations," who shall yet come and shall be hailed as, "King of kings and Lord of lords." O blessed Rainbow, Jesus! When shall Your beauties be beheld by mortal eyes? When shall all kings fall down before You and yield their scepters and their crowns to You?

Again–in the rainbow and in Christ, I see vengeance satisfied. Is not the bow the symbol of the warrior's power? With far-reaching arrows he draws the string, and woe unto his enemies. But when a hero hangs up his bow upon the wall, what means he but that warfare is over and peace is proclaimed? When he loosens the bow and leaves it without the string and without an arrow, it means that he will no more go out to hunt his adversaries. His arrows shall be no more, "drunk with the blood of the slain." He lays the bow aside, hangs it up on high, and leaves it unstrung, without an arrow. Such is the rainbow. A bow, it is true, but a bow hung up–a bow without string or arrow.

And such is Christ, God's Bow. "Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under You." When He takes the "rod of iron," He breaks His enemies in pieces, "like a potter's vessel." "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, traveling in the greatness of His

strength?" Jesus, the Arrow of God, the polished shaft in the quiver of the Most High. But there I see Him–a bow still–still mighty to destroy–but yet a bow without a string. He threw that away, when He came from Heaven to earth, and lay slumbering in the manger. A bow without an arrow!–

"No thunder clothes His brow,
No bolts to drive our guilty souls
To fiercer flames below."

Beloved, Christ is vengeance satisfied. Those wounds, those bright and burnished jewels of His hands, betoken that God demands no more of man. The rainbow, yet again, is a token that vengeance itself has become on our side. You see, it is an unbroken "bow." He did not snap it across His knee. It is a bow still. Vengeance is there, justice is there. But which way is it pointed? It is turned upward. Not to shoot arrows down on us, but for us, if we have faith enough to string it, and to make it our glorious bow–to draw it with all our might, to send our prayers, our praises, our desires, up to the bright Throne of God. Mighty is that man, omnipotent is his faith, who has power to bend that bow and draw it and shoot his prayers to Heaven.

No, more. Inasmuch as it is a bow not black, nor blood-red, but a bow painted with the colors of holiday and delight, it seems to me as if Heaven hangs out its streamers of joy, while angels sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards

men.” They pull the banners from the standards of glory, and they hang them out across the sky, as we do on our ships upon marriage days. Heaven hangs out its glorious banners to show that God is so completely satisfied with Christ and so at peace with man, that He joys in man’s joy, and rejoices in man’s rejoicing–“rests in His love and rejoices in us with singing,”

Look up, Believer, to the Person of Christ. Behold the joy of God, “the pleasure of the Lord,” prospering, “in His hands,” and your soul will be full of ecstasy and delight. Once again, in the rainbow we see the one color of light, which appears to us to be but white, broken up, refracted, distributed, blended, harmonized, brought out in all its distinct elements. There is no doubt that there are more colors in light than our eyes have ever seen. The spectrum of eye can only compass a certain quantity of the colors. But beneath the lowest, and above the highest, there are others. There is infinitely more in God than you and I will ever be able to see.

One of the best sights of light, as dissolved and analyzed, is to be had in the rainbow. There you see the colors arranged in their proper order, and you are able to mark the red melting into the orange, and the orange into the yellow, and the yellow yet again into the green, and the green into the blue, and the blue into the indigo and violet. They are all there–not one put out of place, not one left out. The Character of God is one, like His Essence. Yet to us, that we may read it, it must be, as it were, broken up, but not

thrown out of harmony. He that has seen Christ, “has seen the Father.” He that sees the rainbow sees “Light.” He that sees Christ, sees the Father–God’s justice meeting and blending into His Truth. God’s Truth melting into His mercy. That mercy melting into His love, that love in contact with His faithfulness.

And so every attribute standing side by side with its next of kin. The whole of them absolutely necessary to complete the glory of that arch, and every one of them necessarily to be put in its proper place also, to make the arch a harmony and a very music of colors. Beloved, such is Jesus Christ. If we could but understand Jesus Christ, we could not make mistakes about God. In Jesus I see blood-red justice, justice as fierce as if there were no mercy. But what love I see also! What boundless love! As Watts puts it, we cannot tell–

The power, the wisdom, or the Grace."

They are all so clearly there. The whole of God written out in Christ! And yet, I warn you, we can never see the whole of God–in this life, never. I do not know whether it is quite correct, but two or three of the older commentators, in glossing upon that passage, “there was a rainbow round about the Throne,” say that it means entirely round it, and therefore there is a complete circle–that we only see one half of it, but that, in fact the Covenant rainbow is a circle.

Now, whatever you may think of that gloss, there certainly is one circular rainbow in the Bible, for that angel, in the tenth of Revelation, had "a rainbow round his head." He wore it as a crown round his head. We may, without straining a point, say the most we can ever see, even in Christ, as revealed to us, while we are here, is just a glorious semi-circle of Truth–an arch, like a Divine ladder, by which we may mount to the very loftiness of God Himself. But there is another half which you and I have not seen, and we shall not see it till we get to the Throne of God. Moreover, that rainbow that is in Heaven differs from ours, for there it is, "like unto an emerald." The green preponderates. The mild luster of the mercy of God and His love will seem to triumph over the fiery sardius and jacinth of His justice.

How ought we to act, dear Friends, with regard to this rainbow and Jesus Christ as the symbol of the covenant? First, let us act like little children. Little children run in clapping their hands with glee, "Father, there's a rainbow!" Out they run to look at it, and they wonder whether they could find the end of it. They wish you would let them run till they could catch it. They look, and look, and look, and look, and when the shower begins to abate and it dies out, they are so sorrowful because they have lost the splendid vision. Beloved, let us be children. Whenever we think of Christ, let us be little children and look, and look, and look again. And let us long to get at Him, for, unlike the rainbow, we can get at Him.

Pliny, who, by the way, talks a deal of nonsense, declares that wherever the rainbow's foot rests, the flowers are made much sweeter. And Aristotle says the rainbow is a great breeder of honeydew. I do not know how that is, but I know that wherever Jesus Christ is He makes the perfume of His people very sweet. "His name is as ointment poured forth," and I know He is, "a great breeder of honeydew." There is sure to be much more loving kindness in that man's heart who has seen much of Jesus. I recommend you to follow that Divine Rainbow till you reach the foot of it, and till you embrace it and say with Simeon, "Now let Your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen Your salvation." Play the child then.

While we gaze, ought we not praise and admire? One or two of the nations of antiquity had it as a part of their religion always to sing hymns when they saw the rainbow. Should not we, whenever we see Christ? Should it not be a redletter day marked in our diary? "This day let us praise His name." And as we ought always to see Him, I may improve upon this and bid you say–

"I will praise You every day. Now Your anger's passed away,
Comfortable thoughts arise from the bleeding sacrifice."

And again, when we see Christ, we ought to confess our sins with humiliation. An old writer says that the Jews confess their sins when they see the rainbow. I am sure, whenever we see Christ, we ought to remember the deluge of wrath from which He has

delivered us, the flames of Hell from which He has saved us. And so, humbly bowing ourselves in the dust, let us love and praise and bless His name.

To some of you there is nothing in this sermon, because you have never laid hold on the Covenant. You have never believed in Jesus. Remember, that a simple faith in Christ is the evidence of your being in the Covenant. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, then your name is written in the roll of the blessed. But if you will not believe in Him, however excellent your character, however goodly your works, you shall perish in your sins.

For, “he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not,” be he who he may or what he may, “shall be damned.” Believe, and believing you put yourself under the Divine arch of the blessed Covenant. You shall see its glorious colors with exultation and delight, and you shall be secure, whatever catastrophes shall shake the earth, whatever calamities shall trouble the race of man.

Ge 11:31; 12:5 • Abram's Call; or, Half-way and All the Way

SERMON 2011

Abram's Call—Or, Half-way—And All The Way

"And Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran his son's son and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan. And they came unto Haran and dwelt there."

Genesis 11:31

AFTER the Flood, when men began to multiply and increase in the earth, it was not very long before they began to turn aside from the living and true God. At first the sons of Noah walked in the light of Divine knowledge, though even among them was found an evil seed. When scattered over the earth after the confusion of tongues at Babel, the earth's hoary fathers carried with them a

measure of the knowledge of God which they had received from their sires. But after a while, the light grew dim, men began to worship the sun and the moon and they adored fire as the mystic symbol of the mysterious and spiritual Lord.

They sought out many inventions. And having once begun to quit their allegiance to the one God they very rapidly traveled along the downward road till they worshipped strange gods. It was sad that although the earth produced its mighty hunters and men built city after city, yet few among them sought after God, or built altars to His name. Well might the Lord God cry out, “Hear Me heavens and give ear, O earth–I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me.”

A long period passed without a voice from God. Man seemed left to himself and in danger of being given up to idols. The nations wandered each a different way but all the downward road. Yet Divine Grace had not ended its reign. And therefore before the lamp of God had wholly gone out, the Lord determined to reveal Himself and establish His worship in the world. He would select a family to be His peculiar servants. He would manifest Himself to the father of that family and would make with him a Covenant. He would reveal to him the great things which He intended to do in the fullness of time and He would bid him hand down the Revelation to his children from generation to generation.

This family should grow into a nation and to that nation should be committed the oracles of God. Out of that nation should come Prophets and priests and heroes who should believe in God and maintain the true faith against all comers, even until the Son of God Himself should come to manifest the glory of God in a preeminent degree. In the midst of that nation the Lord resolved to set up ordinances and a settled organization by which Truth should be taught through type and symbol and by the hallowed speech of godly men. This, in His wisdom, He judged to be best for the future of the race.

In the wise sovereignty of His choice, the Lord chose Abram and his house. He gives no account of his matters and we cannot, therefore, tell why he took out of Ur of the Chaldees those of whom Joshua says, "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nachor–and they served other gods." The Lord called Abram alone and blessed him. He set apart the Patriarch and his seed and put them in trust with the priceless treasure of Divine Revelation–this they kept for themselves and for the rest of mankind.

It was needful that the elect family should be led apart and kept from the contamination of surrounding evil. Abram must come out from Ur of the Chaldees and all its associations of idolatry and he must even leave his kindred and his father's house and walk before the Lord in separation unto prompt obedience and complete

consecration. Thus his separation unto God would fulfill the gracious purpose of the Most High. The Lord's end and aim was to keep His Truth alive in the world by means of a people who should be set apart for that service.

It was therefore essential that the person chosen to be the head of that family, the founder of that nation, should come right away from all connection with the corrupt world and walk apart with God. The chosen nation was to dwell alone and not to be numbered among the peoples. Hence came that call which said to Abram, "Get you out of your country and from your kindred and from your father's house unto a land that I will show you: and I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great. And you shall be a blessing."

At this moment God is working in much the same manner in the midst of the world by His Church. A Church is an assembly called out. An ecclesia is not any and every "assembly"–a mixed crowd of unauthorized persons having no special right to come together would not be an ecclesia, or Church. In a real ecclesia the herald summoned the citizens by trumpet or by name and it consisted of certain persons called out from among the common multitude. The true Church consists of men who are called and faithful and chosen. They are redeemed from among men and called out from among their fellows by effectual grace.

God the Holy Spirit continues to call out and bring to the Lord Jesus those who are chosen of God according to the good pleasure of His will. Practically, conversion is the result of the call–"Get you out from your country." It is a repetition of that searching word, "Come you out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." The Church is a repetition of the camp of Abram in the midst of Canaan. It is the Lord's portion among men and it keeps His oracles. The Church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the Truth of God. And it is the design of God to find a home for His Gospel in His Church till the dispensation of Divine Grace shall close and the Judge shall ascend the throne.

In gathering instruction from the call of Abram, I shall handle the matter by making three remarks. First, this call is often only half obeyed. In our first text we find the command of God very partially carried out. Secondly, this call is of a very special character and I shall endeavor to show the manner in which it comes to us at this time. Thirdly, this call, when it is really obeyed, puts the obedient upon a special footing–they are henceforth peculiarly the Lord's. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditation!

In the first place, THIS CALL IS OFTEN ONLY HALF OBEYED. It came to Abram when he dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees. But though he so far hearkened to it as to set out for Canaan, yet we read that "they came to Haran and dwelt there."

We do not know how the call came to Abram, whether by a voice which he heard with his ears, or by a mysterious impulse upon his mind, or by a dream or vision. But Stephen tells us, in the seventh of Acts–"The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham." There may have been given to Abram some such sight of the glory of God as Job had when he cried, "Now my eye sees You." The Lord appeared to Abram and made him to understand that he must emigrate from his country and quit his tribe. Somehow or other, it was laid home to Abram's heart and conscience that he must go forth upon a journey he knew not where. He must journey into another land and no more dwell in city, or town, or village but become a sojourner with his God, a tent-dweller, a stranger in a strange land.

His first step would naturally be to tell his friends that he must leave them, for the living God had called him to go to the land of Canaan. At once his difficulties began. His kindred could not bear to part with him. If they had distinctly opposed him and said, "It is absurd. Your talk is insanity. Yet if you must be gone, go your way and welcome"–then he would have gone in sadness but assuredly he would not have hesitated. A man possessed of Abram's wondrous faith would have torn himself away with great firmness, although with deep regret at the sorrow which he caused. Had they opposed him, his course would have been plain.

But he had to meet with a much more insidious evil. His friends consented to his zeal. Whether they agreed in his reverence for Jehovah or not, they felt that they could not cut themselves off from Abram and therefore they resolved to go with him. The word to Abram was express, “Get you out from your kindred and from your father’s house.” But how was this to be done when his kindred and his father’s house clung to him and yielded to him? Very naturally his loving spirit could see no other way but to bid them all come with him and yield themselves to God.

Possibly Abram looked for great things from this and rejoiced in it. It would seem as if his aged father Terah, with that wisdom which is a near to subtlety, himself led the way in the migration. For we read–“And Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran his son’s son and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan.” The father of the clan leads the way and it is rather his migration than that of Abram. What was Abram to do? Instead of meeting opposition from his family, his own father is leading the way in the journey to Canaan. Did not this make his obedience easier?

We shall see. Was not this happy union of the household, this undivided assent to the Lord’s bidding, a great cause for rejoicing? It certainly appeared so. But all is not gold that glitters. What we think will help may at length hinder. What looks like a work of

grace may turn out to be only the movements of unrenewed nature. Like the mixed multitude which came out of Egypt with Israel, we may have about us professed friends who may become our worst foes in the secret of God's Truth and Divine Grace.

In Abram's case the dreaded separation is spared–they start together for Canaan. So far so good–at least, it looks so. The traveling is wearisome and many are the murmurings. The huge caravan has not gone very far before the proposal is made that they should be satisfied with the move which they had made and remain at Haran. True, it was not Canaan but it might do as well. Did not the family reason, "We shall stay here. We have yielded a great many points to Abram in coming away from Ur. But we cannot yield to all his demands. We have proved our love to him and our reverence for the Lord by coming thus far and now we ask for a fair compromise.

"Abram is very sincere but he must not be bigoted. Surely he will not be so foolish as to believe in verbal inspiration and insist upon Canaan, when Haran quite meets the spirit of the command. There is no doubt that Haran answers every purpose and we mean to stay here and Abram must stay with us." His father pleads that he is very old. To be moving continually is hard for aged people. And there is that broad Euphrates, how can the old man cross that dreaded flood? "Spare your venerable parent this last bitterness–I have come thus far to please you–do not press me further."

I think I am not wildly imagining if I suppose that some such pleas induced the Patriarch to tarry with his kindred at Haran. A loving and tender heart worked against prompt literal obedience and for a while the man of faith delayed, the heir of the promises hesitated. Do you blame him? It will be wiser to look at home. Holy Scripture describes his conduct and appends no absolute word of censure. But it does what is quite as significant–it keeps silent as to anything like a record of blessing, or of communion with God–while Abram was at the half-way house at Haran.

To a friend of God His silence is quite enough of a rebuke. If my friend does not smile, I do not require him to frown to let me know whereabouts I am in his esteem. If my friend no longer speaks to me, I do not need him to upbraid me–his silence is sadly eloquent to my heart. Abram and the rest settled down at Haran. He was conquered, not by open foes but by compromising friends. My Brethren, take good heed unto yourselves that you suffer not your feet to be entangled by the men of your own household. He that would follow the Lamb wherever he goes, must not know his own kindred when he comes to the parting of the ways.

Honest wolves will not harm us one half so much as those who look like sheep but inwardly are not so. Our first father, Adam, fell by the temptation of her whom he loved and the old serpent still knows how to seduce through our affections and lead into ruin by

the suggestion of friendship. O Man of God, beware! Read my parable with open eye and practice the lesson thereof.

Let me describe the consequences of tarrying at any half-way house. To obey the Lord partially is to disobey Him. If the Lord bids Abram go to Canaan, he cannot fulfill that command by going to Haran. Haran was not mentioned in the call. You cannot keep God's command by doing something else which pleases you better. The essence of obedience lies in its exactness. Although something else may seem to you to be quite as good as the thing commanded, what has that to do with it?

This is what God bids you and to refuse the thing commanded, professing to substitute a better thing, is gross presumption. You may not think it so but so it is, that half obedience is whole disobedience. We can only obey the Lord's command as it stands. To alter it is as great a treason as to make erasures in a king's statute-book. It is will-worship and not God worship, if I do what I choose of the Lord's work and leave a part undone which does not please me quite so well.

Moreover, half-way obedience increases our responsibility, because it is a plain confession that we know the Lord's will, though we do it not. Abram had received the call and knew that he had done so, else why had he come to Haran? He admitted, by going as far as Haran, that he ought to go the whole way to Canaan. And so, by his own action he left himself without excuse. And any

of you who are doing in a measure what is right because of the fear of God and yet are acting in other matters contrary to what you know to be the Lord's will, you are left without apology for such neglect.

By the service which you do render to God you admit that He a has right to your obedience–why, then do you not obey Him in all things? You call Jesus your Lord and do some of the things which He says but why not the rest? Is it not clear that you know your Master's will and do it not? Thus, you see, there was failure in obedience and increase of responsibility. The result of this to Abram was the absence of privilege. God spoke not to His servant in Haran–neither dream, nor vision, nor voice came to him in the place of hesitancy. The Lord loved him but hid His face from him and denied him the visits of His Divine Grace.

If we walk contrary to the Lord, He will walk contrary to us. Abram lived with his father Terah. But he was not living near his heavenly Father, and therefore he did not hear His voice. How greatly the true heart dreads this! How earnestly it sighs, "O Lord, be not silent to me, lest if You be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit"! O my Brothers, let us not, by wavering and half-heartedness, lose our communion with the Lord our God.

Meanwhile, Abram was rendering an affliction needful. His father Terah must die that the cord which held Abram might be broken. If the called one will not come out while the old man lives, death

must do his work and remove the cause of disobedience. If Abram fears to weep at parting with a living father, he must weep over his grave. One way or another the Lord will cause His chosen to obey Him. Oh, that we would be tender of heart and not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding! Whips and rods would seldom be heard of if we were more promptly obedient.

While tarrying at Haran, Abram was creating cause of future disquietude by his attachment to Lot. He was told to come out from his kindred but he clung to his orphan nephew and must needs accept his company. Lot caused him a great deal of trouble. His herdsmen created discontent and strife and afterwards Lot himself was carried away captive and peaceful Abram was compelled to gird on the warrior's sword and go forth to battle, to rescue his nephew. Had Abram acted decidedly from the very first, he might have saved himself many a hardship.

My Brethren, learn well these lessons. I merely hint them–will you not enlarge upon them? All this while Abram was delaying the great blessing which God was prepared to give him, he was keeping out of the promised land and away from the place where Jehovah would manifest Himself to him and enter into covenant with him. I fear that some true Believers are depriving themselves of the richest joy and the most heavenly experience by their undecided conduct. Some of you have come away from your old sins but you have not yet entered upon the new life in its fullness.

You have left Ur of the Chaldees–the place of open sin–but you have not come to Canaan the holy.

You are tarrying in the Haran of a partial obedience, which is neither here nor there–a sort of death in life, rebellion in obedience, unbelief in faith. I know many professors who have left their vicious habits but they are not yet consecrated to the Lord Jesus–they are not absolutely in the world and yet they are not abiding in the Lord. Their speech is half of Ashdod and half of the Jews' language. They dare not be Philistines and yet they will not be Israelites. They are willing to be saved by the Cross of Christ but they are not willing to take up Christ's Cross and come right out decidedly upon His side at all times. This is a perilous state to be in.

They have enough religion to make them miserable, but, I fear, not enough to fit them for joys eternal. They may ultimately get into Heaven by the skin of their teeth–at least, I hope so. But they have no present joy, no immediate peace, no conscious fellowship with God. Half-way house godliness is wretched stuff–beware of it! Remember what we read of the mongrels who dwelt in Israel's land, who had been brought there by the Assyrian conqueror. They feared the Lord and served other gods and, therefore, Jehovah sent lions among them. Let all who are of that race remember the lions. For the Lord will not suffer such double-minded ones to live in peace before Him.

Thus much, then, upon my first point–the Divine call is too often only half obeyed.

II. Secondly, THIS CALL, ESPECIALLY AS IT COMES TO US, IS OF A VERY PECULIAR CHARACTER.

To us, of course, it is wholly spiritual. We are not called today to leave our country and our kindred so far as our residence is concerned. But it seems to me that we are called to a much more difficult position than that, namely, to stay on the old spot, among old friends and yet to lead a wholly new life. Of course, we are to quit all evil company. But we are not to leave the society of our fellow men, nor to go out of the world. Even Abram was not called to be an ascetic, nor to live in a cave, nor to retire into the desert like a hermit.

Within the borders of his own encampment Abram was a man among men and pursued his daily calling as the keeper of great flocks of sheep and herds of oxen and camels and so forth. Towards his neighbors he behaved himself with noble-minded independence and integrity. He was a pattern of what Divine Grace can make of a really noble man when he moves among those who are strangers to his God. But yet, Beloved, Abram did, to a great extent, dwell in a favorable condition. He lived apart from the grosser sort. He was not wearied with the voices of a city, as Lot was–his own tents and the many tents of his servants, made up quite a settlement, where God's name was reverenced and the fear of the Lord was felt.

That canvas town had one over it of whom the Lord said, “I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him and they shall keep the way of the Lord.” Some of us can almost seclude our families but many others have a far harder task. They have to live in the city amid its sins and yet not to be of it. They have in their earthly callings to come into daily contact with the ungodly and yet they have to be holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. As Abram was no Canaanite, though he sojourned in Canaan, so are we to prove ourselves to be of a totally distinct race. This is a very difficult piece of business.

How great a wonder was asked by our Savior’s prayer–“I pray not that You should take them out of the world but that You should keep them from the Evil One”! Not by difference in brogue, nor by peculiarity in dress are we to be marked out as the servants of God. But our lives must be so Christ-like and pure that men shall say of us, “You also were with Jesus of Nazareth, for your life betrays you.” This call, then, is of a deeply spiritual and peculiar character. My Brother, have you heard it? My Sister, have you heard it? Have you endeavored to obey it to the full? It means just this–that we are to flee all sin, without exception and follow after everything that is pure and holy.

Others wallow in what they call the pleasures of sin–abhor such things and protest against them. Shun, also, everything that is doubtful. For, “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” If you are not sure

it is right, it is sin to you. Avoid the appearance of evil. Separate yourself from all that which Christ would have disapproved. Be so decided, also, as to leave everything that is hesitating. Be out-and-out for Jesus. While many will try to run both with the hare and the hounds, make it your object to abhor that which is evil and to cleave to that which is good. Make a point of wearing your regimentals. Be dead and buried to this present evil world with its frivolities, philosophies and grandeurs.

Regard the world as crucified to you and be yourself crucified to it. The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Go without the camp bearing Christ's reproach. In matters of religion follow the Lord fully, let the Word of God be your sole and sure rule and nothing else. That religion which is not according to God's Word is a false religion. Accept neither doctrine nor ceremony for which there is no Scriptural warrant. Search the Word about it all–"to the Law and to the testimony–if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." Follow your conscience, as your conscience is enlightened by the Spirit of God concerning His Word.

Follow the Word even in its jots and tittles. Make not too much of peculiarities in comparison with vital and fundamental Truths of God. But, still, even with these less weighty matters, take heed that you do not trifle, lest in neglecting the less you learn to neglect the greater and so become guilty of the great transgression. Avoid the

world's religion. For if there is one world worse than another, it is the Christian world. No enemies of Israel were so bitter as their Brethren the Edomites–Brethren in name only become the fiercest of foes. Be distinctly removed from the religion which is based upon self-will, pride of intellect and worldly conformity.

The world's religion is as evil as the world's irreligion. Surrender to the plain teaching of the Spirit of God and resolve in all things to follow your Lord wherever He may lead you. Stand alone, if others will not obey. In your house let there be an altar for God, if there is not another in the land. Make a Covenant with God through the one great Sacrifice, even if all others forget the Savior.

See, dear Friends, what the call is, and then remember that it comes to the Believer from God Himself. The Lord calls His servants unto the separated life and because of His authority they are bound to obey. He calls by His Word, either preached or read–it comes to the individual by an application of the Spirit of God so that the man yields cheerful assent. He is drawn and therefore he runs. Such a person feels it a pleasure to take Christ for his example and to put his feet down in the very tracks of the Lord Jesus. It is ours to follow the Lord's precept and example with great care and solemn determination, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. It was so with Abram–is it so with you?

Because this call comes from God, it has for us a supreme authority. We follow our Lord even when darkness is round about

Him–though we know not the way, we know the Lord, and therefore we follow Him implicitly. To us the Word of God is more than the decrees of emperors, or the statutes of senators. If this thing were of men, if this thing were ordained by a learned council, or a reverend bench, it would be of small account in our eyes. But when He that made us and redeemed us speaks to us, we can only reply, "Help Your servants to do Your will–for Your will is our delight."

My Brethren, if we thus separate ourselves unto obedience, we must expect violent opposition. Severe criticism will not be spared us. Of course, some will say, "The man is mad"–others more gently will murmur, "He is sadly misled." Many will accuse you of a liking to be singular, or a weakness for going to extremes, or a self-righteous wish to excel others, or of having "a bee in your bonnet." Accusers will hint that you are seeking your own in some form or other. And if they cannot quite see a motive, they will imagine one. What is the use of imagination if it will not help a man out when his facts run short? Having once made up their mind that you are foolish and contemptible they will view all your conduct through colored glasses and condemn you up and down. Be not dismayed but endure hardness for the love of Jesus.

To go forth and lead a separated life will need faith and to have faith you will need the Divine Grace of God. Believe that God's command is right and believe that He will justify you in fulfilling

it. Believe that God's promise is true and that He will prove it so. Abram was bid to go and he went. Look at Abram's case and see how impossible it was for him to obey apart from faith in God. He was to go away from all that was dear, from all that was comfortable and settled. He was to go, he knew not where, and he was to go to obtain an inheritance for a son that was not born and that was not likely ever to be born. For he was old and Sarai was well stricken in years.

Only faith could enable him to obey a call which looked so like a delusion. We need faith in every step of a holy life. Oh for more looking unto Jesus, more child-like dependence upon God! If you believe, you will do the Lord's will. But if you do not believe, you will refuse to obey and miss the blessing.

Suppose we do obey the Divine call, what then? Will our course be smooth ever afterwards? Far from it. The walk of the separated Believer involves trial. The trial of Abram in leaving his country was but one out of ten which are recorded. It is written, "In the world you shall have tribulation." In the Lord's vineyard the knife is used if nowhere else. The Lord tried Abram and He will try us–it is a part of the process of love by which He prepares us for the eternal rest. The course of true faith never does run smooth. If you will obey the Divine call you shall be favored with more trials, you shall be honored with still greater tests of your fidelity. But then you shall be known as the friend of God and God, by His Divine

Grace, shall make you to be a blessing to others even to the end of time.

Mark well what is proposed to you–that God shall take you and give you His light and His Truth and His salvation–that you may preserve it for all the ages, until Christ shall come. Are you willing to accept so high an honor? Will you count the cost and make your calling and election sure? Will you cry with Esaias, "Here am I! Send me"? As the Roman consul devoted himself to death in battle for the sake of the beloved city, will you devote yourself to God and His cause, and Truth?

In very deed such is my spirit. I wish there were ten thousand who would say the same. O my Brother, blessed are you among men if you are set apart for God and Truth. Yes, my Sister, blessed are you among women, if you are following the Lord fully in the way of His will.

III. This brings me to my third and last point. THIS CALL, WHEN IT IS OBEYED, PUTS US ON SPECIAL GROUND.

For, first, God is bound to justify the course which He Himself commands. When Abram went to Canaan at the Lord's bidding and remained there, the responsibility was with the Lord. If any evil had come of Abram's conduct he could not have blamed himself. It was neither his own wisdom nor his own folly which led him–God alone was his director. It is mine to obey, it is God's to prove that my obedience is wise. What peace this brings! O my Hearer, if you

believe in Christ with all your heart and if you become a sincere follower of Jesus in all things, God will justify you in so doing, for you do it at His bidding.

If there is any folly in holiness, the folly is not with you but with Him that bade you be holy. The servant is accountable for any action he does of his own head but not for that which he does by the command of his principal. So you, in keeping close to God's will, are not accountable for consequences. The consequences must lie with God. As surely as wisdom is justified of her children, so is God justified of all Believers. Yes, and He justifies Believers, and their faith is counted unto them for righteousness. Therefore, Beloved, we stand on the ground of justification when we obey the call of God.

We cease, also, from that moment to be of the world. God deals with the world one way but with His separated ones in another way. "Them that are without, God judges." But those who are within are not under Law but under Grace. It is the joy of faith that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. There is discipline now within the House of God–but it is not that of a court of justice but of the abode of love. The Lord chastens His children that they may not be condemned with the world. The separated ones are not numbered among the people of the earth.

When you read of the seven trumpets and vials and plagues, fear not, for nothing shall by any means hurt you. When the blood shall

flow in the day of vengeance up to the horses' bridles, then shall not a hair of your head perish, for the Lord secures those who are sealed to Him. Babylon must fall, that lies hard by Ur of the Chaldees, from where you came. And all that bear the mark of the beast shall die, even as Terah died in Haran. But as for you, “at destruction and famine you shall laugh.” No evil shall touch you, for the Lord is your keeper.

If you are walking in the separated path with God and are setting Him always before you, you shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. What a condition to be in! First justified, and then secured from the doom which will surely fall upon the guilty world. Now, as free Divine Grace has separated you unto God, you come into an honored fellowship with Him. Abram, in his tent, had God for his companion. He had near and clear manifestations of God. He entertained angels unawares, and with those angels was the Son of God Himself.

If you quit the world to abide with God, God Himself will abide with you. If you come out from the unclean world, the Lord has said, “I will dwell in them and walk in them. I will be a father unto them and they shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord God Almighty.” Oh, rest you in this sweet fact, that the Triune God will manifest Himself to His chosen as He does not to the world. You shall be one of the people near unto Him.

By coming out from the world and following the Lord closely, we come under His Divine care and protection. How wonderfully Abram was screened from evil! Jehovah was his shield. He was a stranger in the midst of enemies but they did not molest him–an awe was upon them, for Jehovah had said, "Touch not My anointed and do my Prophets no harm." Wherever a true saint goes, the Lord lays His commands on all the powers of nature and all the angels of Heaven to take care of him. When Abram was at peace, God blessed him in all things. And if he went to war, God gave his enemies as driven stubble to his bow.

If we are with God, God is with us. When God's will is our delight, God's Providence is our inheritance. It is not so with you all–no, not even with all of you who profess to be Christians. But it is so with those of you who keep close to God's Word and follow in will, in spirit, in belief and in act the example of His dear Son. O Beloved, let us strive after this! Let us aim at perfect conformity to the will of God, for this will place us in quiet nearness to God.

Henceforth Abram was for God's use only. God treated him as His confidant, as the receiver of heavenly Revelations and as the founder of a race. God will also use us if we will come where He can use us. Vessels set apart for the Master's use must not be used by the servants. God is a great King. And when He selects a cup for His own table, He will not have it used by others. If other lips drink out of the chalice of your life, the Lord disdains you. You must be

for Him only, or you are not His spouse. If you are His from the crown of your head to the sole of your foot by solemn consecration, He will honor you yet more and more. Yes, you know not to what high ends He has ordained you, both in this life and in the ages to come. But look you well to this, that you be holiness unto the Lord.

One more thought presses itself upon my heart–the man who for Christ's sake has cut all his moorings and separated himself from the world to follow the Lamb–has learned how to live but he has also learned how to die. We die unto the world and thereby learn to die. When we cease to trust in riches, when we resign our comforts, when we no longer lean on friends, when all things visible become as shadows to us, then we make a rehearsal of death. Unless the Lord Himself shall soon descend from Heaven with a shout, we shall all die. Yes, the hour of our departure hastens on. Then we shall have to cut ourselves loose from our moorings, be they what they may.

Soon shall we hear this word from Heaven, "Get you out of your country and from your kindred and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you." This will be our summons to the better Canaan, the land that flows with milk and honey. We shall depart out of this world to face an unknown eternity. But we shall by no means dread the migration. He that has crossed the great river, the river Euphrates, will not fear the Jordan. To give up the world will be no new thing for you or for me–we have given it up many times

already. We have frequently given up everything into the Lord's hands in real earnest and we can readily do it once more.

We live here as strangers and sojourners and we find little to charm us in this foreign land. Our treasure is above and it will be a joy for our souls to rise to the place where our hearts already dwell. We cannot be sorry to quit a dead world. Who loves to sit in a morgue? If we tremble to leave kindred and friends, yet let us remember that we have already quit them in spirit. Let us journey, as Abram did, towards the south. That is to say, let us get still further away from the old abode. Let us make for the heart of Immanuel's land. Let us press towards the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city and rest not till we stand in our lot and behold Him whom Abram saw with gladness.

The one question I finish with is–Do you know anything about this? Have you ever felt this Divine call? If so, make your calling and election sure. Carry out the separating ordinance to the full. Some of us had to take very decided steps at our first starting but we began aright. We have been called since to equally painful courses but we hope to keep right. Anything is better than a wound in the conscience. If we keep close to Christ we shall find rest unto our souls. We look back without regret to what we may have suffered by decision–counting it less than nothing for the joy that was set before us.

We wish that all our converts would be out-and-out in their course of life. O you, who by Divine Grace are beginners in the heavenly life, make a strong resolve–"We will be the servants of God and endeavor in all things to obey Him." Since God made you and by the blood of His dear Son redeemed you, it is yours to be doubly the Lord's. There are the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ–are these yours? Make sure on that point. And if they are yours, yield yourself to Jesus and from this day forward do His bidding without question or delay.

Quit everything contrary to the Lord's mind and will. At all cost be true–then shall the Lord be your delight and His service shall be your Heaven below. If you are now separated unto Him, you shall find your reward in that day when He shall divide the sheep from the goats–for then you shall be placed at His right hand to hear Him say, "Come, you blessed of My Father."

May you be the children of believing Abram for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Ge 12:2 • Abraham's Double Blessing

SERMON 2523

Abraham's Double Blessing

"I will bless you, and you shall be a blessing."

Genesis 12:2

THIS was to be the double result of Abraham's coming out from his own country and his father's house. Those Orientals clung with great tenacity to their native homes. We, in these latter ages, are not so restful–we think nothing of crossing the Atlantic and many think little of going to the other side of the globe–but those Easterns trembled, even, to cross the Euphrates or the Tigris! They spoke of the land beyond those rivers as "across the flood," and a journey of two or three hundred miles seemed to them to be an event only second to death, itself. Yet when the Lord said to Abraham, "Get

you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you," he, "departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him." His obedience was an act of heroic faith!

Now, Brothers and Sisters, in consequence of this obedience, Abraham obtained the double blessing of which our text speaks. He is called the Father of the Faithful, that is, the father of all such as believe in God, so that, if we truly believe in God, we shall do what Abraham as a Believer did. Children are like their father. Believers are like the father of all Believers, so that there will be a going out for them as there was for him. We may not be called to actually leave our homes and our native land, but we shall have a great deal more troublesome task than that, for we are to be separated from the people among whom we dwell–to dwell among them, yet not to be of them–in the world, but not of the world! This is not an easy thing. It is far easier to become a monk, or a nun, and shut yourself up alone, than it is to live in the midst of ungodly people and yet to be, yourself, godly–to trade with the usual followers of commerce and not to fall into their business customs–to mix with the usual host of thinkers, yet not to think as they think, but to endeavor to think the thoughts of God and to obey the will of the Most High.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was the most perfect Man among men. In no respect, in dress or in anything else, did He separate Himself from the rest of mankind by anything merely external. He ate and

drank just as they did. He sat at their tables, slept in their houses and talked with them by the way–yet was He always “holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.” All Believers are called thus to live in the world a separated life, in obedience to the Divine command, “Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.” There is no necessity for us to wear either the broad-brimmed hat or the collarless coat, or anything whatever by which we shall be marked off from the rest of men. We are to be separated in reality , to be separated by a higher toneof morals, to be separated by a truer life–a life with God, a life in God–to be separated by faith in the unseen, to beseparated by an enthusiasm to which the rest of mankind will not pretend, which, indeed, they will even despise! This is the high, hard, holy, heavenly task to which Believers in Christ are called. Oh, for Grace to accomplish it!

In proportion as we accomplish it, the words of my text will come true to us–“I will bless you, and you shall be a blessing.” As far as Abraham did

not live the life of separation, so far he missed the blessing. You remember that he went

down into Egypt and you know what trouble he got into there–and he brought more trouble away with him. As I said, this morning, (see exposition at end of sermon), very likely Hagar was one of the slaves given to him by Pharaoh when he dismissed him

and Sarah–and you know what trouble Hagar brought into the family. (Sermon #1869, Volume 31–Hagar at the Fountain). If Abraham had lived the separated life and had not fallen into the customs of those round about him, he would not have had that sin and sorrow concerning Hagar. Nor would he have had that righteous rebuke from Abimelech, the king of Gerar, when again he had acted deceitfully with regard to his wife.

Whenever you see Abraham living alone before the Lord, you see a man of God, blessed of God, even as the Lord said, "I called him alone, and blessed him." But when he goes and links himself with others, he loses the fullness of the blessing and gets into serious trouble. And you, Christian men and women, will find that as long as you keep close to your Lord and Master, you will enjoy His blessing. You may have cares and trials, but they shall be blessed cares and blessed trials! But if you go into the world and act as men of the world act–if you sow your wild oats, you will have to reap them! Depend upon it, the child of God will feel the weight of his Father's rod if he begins to play with the boys of the street. If he is not careful of his company, keeping with his Father's children–and careful of his life and conversation, doing and saying what his Father would have him do and say–he will find the rod fall heavily upon his shoulders, even as the Lord said of old to the children of Israel, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

The blessings of which I am about to speak belong to those who live the separated life, to those who keep in the narrow way. Just in proportion as the Grace of God helps us into that separated life and keeps us there, we shall be blessed and shall be made a blessing.

First, let us consider THE FIRST BLESSING promised to Abraham in our text–"I will bless you." Notice that the personal blessing comes first. You cannot be a blessing to others unless God has first blessed you. We do not encourage selfishness in anything, but we do say that you must fill your own pitcher before another man can drink out of it. You must have bread in your own hands before you can break it for the multitudes. It is no use for you to attempt to sow out of an empty basket, for that would be sowing nothing but wind. First of all, then, you must get the blessing yourself, for until it can be said to you, "I will bless you," it cannot be said, "You shall be a blessing."

What was the blessing which God gave Abraham? It was the blessing which He will give to all who live as Abraham lived and believe as Abraham believed! And, first, Abraham had the rest of faith. He had no home except his tent–always an uncomfortable style of dwelling–and no plot of land to call his own. He was a mere gypsy, moving about from place to place. "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." Yet, surely, there never was a man more restful than this

same Abraham! Wherever you meet him, he stands out before you as a calm, quiet, noble figure. Jacob is always cunning, bargaining, plotting and scheming. But Abraham has nothing of that sort of character–he is a plain, simple man–believing in God and going about his business with that leisure which comes of perfect trustfulness. If God says to him, "Leave your country," he leaves it. Go and ask him, "Where are you going, Abraham?" He does not know. God has told him to go out and he is going. The Canaanite is still in the land of promise–is he not afraid to go there? May not the inhabitants cut him off, directly, if he comes near them?

Abraham is not afraid! God has told him to go to the land of Canaan and he feels that he has a right to be there. God causes a superstitious dread to fall upon those Canaanites–a voice seems to whisper in their heart, "Touch not My anointed"–and so Abraham dwells securely among them. An invading host comes from a distance and carries away his poor nephew, Lot, who has gone to live down Sodom way, that he may be more comfortable in a city. Abraham does not deliberate about his course of action–it is his business to set Lot free–so, with the few young men who are around him, the old man pursues the five kings, drives them before him like stubble driven before the wind, and brings back his nephew Lot and all the spoil! He never sets his hand to anything but he succeeds in it, and he never seems to worry himself about anything! God's will is the one rule that he is always content to

obey and he feels perfectly satisfied wherever he may be. Kings fall down before him, for he is a more truly royal personage than those who are draped in purple, and who wear crowns! They say that he is one of nature's true princes and so he is. God had made him a prince by one touch of faith, for it was faith that did it all–he believed in God and that believing made him truly great!

Do not say, dear Friends, that this faith was only possible to Abraham. Brothers, Sisters, it is possible to us, also, if we will have it. May God help us to believe the promise and not to be staggered at it through unbelief! If we will but trust God through thick and thin, through dark and light–if we will but believe God more than we believe our eyes or our ears–if we will but believe steadily, even though our own body seems as dead, that God will keep His promise to the very letter. And if we will, through that faith, always do the right, and never be daunted or turned aside, then shall our peace be like a river and our righteousness as the waves of the sea–and there shall be a kingly majesty about our character, simple and unadorned as it may be, and open as it may seem to be to the jests and sarcasms of an unbelieving age!

Whatever men may say, they will really respect and reverence the man who believes in God and lives as a man of faith should live. If you want perfect rest in this life–and it is worth more than thousands of precious jewels–if you would wear in your buttonhole the herb called heartsease–if you would go through the world

content, quiet, happy and free from care and fear, “trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.” Has not God said, “I will bless you”? He will bless you by means of your own faith, making you a peaceful, happy person while all the world besides seems to be up in arms, worried and anxious!

Beside the rest of faith, Abraham had the victory of faith. “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even ourfaith.” Abraham was not a fighting man, but when he was called to fight, he fought in real earnest, and his adversaries fell or fled before him. The victory of Abraham’s faith, when he vanquished Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, was not only a victory on the battlefield, but a victory afterwards! Those kings had taken the spoils of the kings of the cities of the plain and had carried away all the booty, but Abraham recovered it all, so that he might have claimed it as his own–and even the king of Sodom said to him, “Give me the persons, and take the goods to yourself.” It was a fine pile, no doubt, and ordinary men do not look at such treasures without some kind of longing for them, but Abraham answered, “I have lifted up my hands unto the Lord, the Most High God, the possessor of Heaven and earth, that I will not take from you a thread even to a shoelace, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’” “No,” says

the Patriarch, “what I receive shall come from God, and not from the king of Sodom.”

It was a real victory of faith for him to be able to act like that. It is a great thing for a Christian to conquer sin, but I reckon that it is a greater thing for him not to yield to that which looks dubious, or that which is selfish although it may be just. It is a victory for faith when the man says, “No, no! I might do this, or that, or the other, but I am a child of God and, therefore, I shall not do it. I trust in God and I will not do it, lest at any time in my future life someone should say, ‘That was not acting as a Christian should act.’ No, I will not take from a thread even to a shoelace that belongs to the king of Sodom, lest thereby my God should be displeased or dishonored.” What a glorious victory Abraham had that day in the king’s dale!

A Christian, if he lives to God by faith, will often have just such a victory as that. If he has not as much of this world’s goods as others have, he will not fret and pine after them. He will say, “I am happy enough without them.” And if God should be pleased to give him riches, he will live above them and he will never let them get into his heart. “No,” he will say, “I am not enriched by these things. My treasure is of a higher and nobler kind.” There are many men who could not be trusted to be rich, for if they were to attain to wealth, they would become proud and make an idol of their gold. But the true heir of Heaven has received this blessing from God–that he

knows, with Paul, both how to be abased and how to abound, how to be full and to be hungry. He has learned, in whatever state he is, to be content. And the man who has learned that lesson is a blessed man!

Another blessing which Abraham had, and which all Believers may have, is this–he had power with God. Oh, thatevery one of us possessed such power and constantly used it! God was about to destroy the cities of the plain on account of their horrible lusts and He said to Himself, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Was not he a blessed man concerning whom God asked that question? God goes to Abraham and tells him what He is about to do. And Abraham, at once, with the power that he had with God, begins to plead with Him in that famous dialogue between the man of God and the God of the man! You know how he pleaded–"Will You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Perhaps there are fifty righteous within the city: will You also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are there?" The next plea was, "Will you destroy all the city for lack of forty-five?" Then he brought the number down to forty, to thirty, to 20 and, at last, to 10 righteous. Was it not a glorious thing for this man, this sheik, this Bedouin of the desert, to plead and wrestle thus with the eternal God?

Talk not to me about the grandeur of kings upon their thrones–Abraham speaking thus with God is greater than all of them put

together! Tell me not of brave warriors returning from the fight amid the acclamations of the throng! This lonely man, grasping the arm of Jehovah and urging his suit for mercy for the people of these doomed cities, is a greater man than all mortals besides! They used to say of Luther, as he walked along the street, “There goes the man who can have of God anything he likes to ask.” And there are some I know to whom God has given this same privilege! And if we will but walk alone with God and will fully trust Him, He will give us carte blanche–given it to us in thosewondrous words of Christ, “If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” “Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” It is as if the silver keys of Paradise swung at the belts of the saints! Have they not had the keys of the rain? Did not Elijah turn the key and shut up the clouds for three years and six months–and then turn it the other way and bring a blessed deluge on the land? Oh, if we have but faith, we shall have this high privilege of coming to the Mercy Seat, just when we will, and asking of our God according to our need–and His promise shall be fulfilled to each one of us, “I will bless you.”

I must add, yet further, that Abraham had from God the great blessedness of being sustained under trial. Have youever noticed a certain little record concerning Abraham? It is after he had offered up his son, Isaac. That was the sharpest trial that could have

befallen mortal man–to be commanded to go and offer up his own son, his only son, his beloved son–the son who had been miraculously given to him! But he, with stalwart faith, felt sure that God would keep His promise and that He would raise Isaac from the dead, if necessary, so it was not for him to reason about the matter, but to do what seemed to be the terrible will of God. Some little while after that great trial, it is written, "Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." That is the short history of his long life–God told him that He would bless him–and He did. "The Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." What? When He commanded him to slay his son? Yes. He "had blessed him in all things." What? When He took away his wife Sarah? Yes, for, "the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things."

Perhaps, if his life had been without troubles, that sentence would not have been true! Just look at this matter a moment, dear Friends. When you and I, with all our cares, trials, poverty, suffering and pain shall get to our journey's end, if we have faith like Abraham's, it will be written of each one of us, "The Lord had blessed him in all things–blessed him in his troubles, blessed him in those cruel tests of faith as they seemed to be–blessed him by sustaining him under them all." I think that if I were an old sailor, I would not like to have had a life on a sea of glass. If I were at home, say at 70 years of age, and my grandchildren had gathered around me to hear

the story of my life, I would not like to have to sum it all up by saying, “Boys, I do not know anything about storms. I never was in one in my life. You see, I never went to sea without a favorable wind. Whenever I got on board ship, all storms ceased and I had nothing to do but just to watch until I reached the port.” I expect the boys would ask, “But, Grandfather, were there never any big waves?” “No, never.” “Were you never cast away on a rock?” “No, never–it was all smooth with me from beginning to end.”

There would be nothing to tell about a life like that and a man would not make much of a sailor that way. Or suppose it is one of our soldiers who, when he has retired from the army says, “I never smelt gunpowder.” I pray God that our soldiers may never have to fight, but still, a man will never make anything of a soldier if that is the fact with him. And you and I will not make stalwart Christians without trials and troubles! And when we get to Heaven, we shall not have so much for which to glorify God if we have had our bread and butter spread for us from the first day to the last, and have never had any lack of food, never any hard labor, never any stern affliction, never any bitter pain, never any deep distress! But how blessed are they who have done business in great waters, who have seen the white teeth of the storm furies and sailed through the very throat of death and come out safely! How blessed are they who have had much reason for fear, but who have had no fear, God having lifted them above it by the supernatural energy of His

Grace! So, Brothers and Sisters, you may often have blessing come to you, not in the shape of a rolled path all the way to Heaven, but in the shape of a faith that endures to the end, so that you shall stand firm in every temptation and, at the last, shallenter into your rest and say at the end of all, "God has blessed me in all things, blessed be His holy name!"

Another special favor that Abraham had was God's Presence. I think that the greatest blessing God ever gives to aman is His own Presence. If I had my choice of all the blessings of this life, I certainly should not ask for wealth, for that can bring no ease. And I certainly should not ask for popularity, for there is no rest to the man upon whose words men constantly wait–and it is a hard task one has to perform in such a case as that. But I should choose, as my highest honor, to have God always with me. Who would choose between the burning fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar and a bed of down if God was equally with us in both cases? It matters not! We might be just as happy in the one case as in the other. If God is with us–if His Divine love surrounds us–we carry our own atmosphere wherever we go, we take our own abode with us wherever we journey! And with Moses we can say, "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations." That heart is full of Heaven that is full of God. That man is blessed to all the intents of bliss who dwells in God and in whom God dwells! And that is the privilege

of all who truly believe in Jesus, all who come out from the world and live a life of faith as Abraham did.

Bow your head, Believer, and let the Lord God pronounce on you this benediction, “Surely, blessing I will bless you.” Sorrowing, suffering, weary, burdened, yet receive this blessing as from God’s own mouth, “I will bless you.” Poor, despised, slandered, yet is the blessing not one whit curtailed! So, take it home with you and go on your way rejoicing!

II. Now let us turn to the second part of the text and consider THE SECOND BLESSING promised to Abraham. “You shall be a blessing.” When God has blessed any man, He makes that man to be a blessing to others. The Lord fills him that he may overflow with blessing for those around him. The Holy Spirit puts into the man the life of God that that life may flow out of him to others.

How, then, do we bless other men? I answer–genuine Christians bless other men by their example. I will give youone instance–sometimes an instance is better than an explanation. I suppose that there is hardly a person here who has not heard of that famous preacher of the Gospel, Mr. John Angell James. I remember, 33 years ago, taking a journey from Cambridge to Birmingham, that I might be able to say that I had heard Mr. John Angell James preach. And I did hear him preach, greatly to my comfort and joy. You know that he wrote that book, The Anxious Enquirer, which hasbeen the means of bringing so many to Christ, but did you ever

hear how John Angell James came to be a Christian and a preacher? He was engaged as a clerk in an office, as many of you may be, and he slept upon his master's premises. He had been accustomed, when he retired for the night, to get into bed without any prayer or any reading of the Scriptures, but there came into the same office a new clerk, a young man. James went upstairs, undressed himself as quickly as he could, and got into bed, when, to his surprise, the new clerk moved the candle, went to his box, took out his Bible, drew his chair up, sat down as if he was quite at home, and read a chapter!

Then, with equal deliberation, he knelt down at his bedside and prayed. He never said a word to John Angell James about not praying, But he did what was a great deal better–he, himself, prayed. Within a few months from that time,Mr. James was a converted man! Within two or three years, he was a minister of the Gospel, and I cannot help tracing the usefulness of the preacher to the decision of that young unknown clerk who dared to do the right thing come what might! "I will bless you," said God to that young clerk, "and I will make you a blessing." I wonder whether, afterwards, he used to say to himself, "I thank God that I knelt down and prayed that night, because, by that simple act of mine, that man of God was brought to the feet of Jesus and tens of thousands were converted by his instrumentality"?

“I will make you a blessing.” Oh, that our example might be such that, wherever we go, we may be a blessing! Some of you, perhaps, have lived in very poor neighborhoods–you have got into poverty and have to dwell in a back slum. As soon as you are converted, you want to move away and I do not blame you–who would like to remain there? At the same time, it seems a pity that the moment there is a lamp lit, we should take it out of the dark corner. That slum is where your example is needed, my Brother! Where do you put the salt? Why, of course, where there is something that, without it, will rot! So there must be children of God who will say, “We mean to live here and drive the devil out. We do not intend to leave this corner, but we mean to stay here and fight the foe till God shall give us the victory.”

Further, dear Friends, those whom God uses are made a blessing by their prayers. Does anybody know the full extentof the blessings which come upon us in answer to the prayers of others? Unhappy is the man who has not somebody praying for him! But rich is that one who is daily the object of the prayers of saints. O dear Friends, if God has saved you, never stint your prayers for others! I ask a share in them–I count myself rich in having the prayers of so many–how often am I gladdened and comforted when I know that there are thousands of Christian people who have pledged themselves never to pray either morning or evening without remembering me in their prayers! I thank them from the bottom of

my heart–they can do me no greater kindness! Pray for all ministers of Christ, pray for all Christians and pray day and night for this great wicked city of ours, steeped up to its throat in sin! God have mercy upon it! Get to your chamber, child of God, and bow your knees and cry mightily unto the Most High, for these evil days sorely need it. If ever we needed intercessors, it is now! If John Knox's prayers saved Scotland–and they did–we need a man like he to save England and to bless our country at this present moment. You can be made a blessing by your intense and vehement prayers! Therefore, all of you who are Believers "pray without ceasing."

Moreover, if God has blessed us, we ought to try to be made a blessing by our ordinary life. Sydney Smith, the wittyclergyman, often said some very good things and one I remember was, "Always make it a rule to make somebody happy every day, even if it is only by giving a child a farthing, or helping a poor woman to carry a parcel that is too heavy for her." There really is so much misery m the world that it is a pity for us to cause a child to cry, or even to cause a dog to go howling down the street! I think that we ought to make everyone happy wherever we are, for our Master went about doing good to all sorts and conditions of men. But certainly in our own family we who love the Lord should have the brightest eyes and the most cheering countenances. I know some professed Christians who are so dreadfully good, so painfully pious, that I cannot live near them. "You shall not, you shall not,"

seems written across their very foreheads! All that we must not do, they perfectly understand, but wherein there is anything of joy and delight and pleasure in thisholy faith of ours, which came from our blessed joyous Savior–for such He was, though He was the Man of Sorrows–all that they seem to forget!

Let it not be so among us, dear Friends, but let us try with all our might to be a blessing to everybody and, most of all, to be a blessing to those for whom nobody cares. Let us go out of our way to remember the forgotten, to help the helpless, to succor those who are in the deepest need. You know how it is in this world, everybody will give something to the person who does not need it–but why not give to the poor, the needy and the helpless? That is where our gifts should go most freely. These cannot make us a return, but we shall have a reward at the last if we do them good. Oh, for the faith which is truly a blessing because we endeavor to make other people happy wherever we may be!

"I will make you a blessing." When this promise came to Abraham, surely the very essence of it was that Abraham was

to be made a blessing to the world by virtue of his connection with Jesus Christ. Our Lord was descended from Abraham–"He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." Our Savior was a Jew. He took upon Himself the nature of that race and therein Abraham became a blessing to the whole world! And now, spiritually, we who believe are the children

of Abraham. We come not into the Covenant as they do who are merely descended from Abraham after the flesh, but we come in with Isaac, the child of the promise, born not after the flesh, but after the power of the Spirit! And so we become heirs of salvation by virtue of that faith which was in Abraham and which dwells also in us by the gift of the Holy Spirit! Beloved, if you and I are to be made a blessing to others, it must be by our bringing the Lord Jesus Christ to thosewhom we meet from day to day. Do not talk to a friend without speaking of your Savior. Do not be long in a house without introducing that dear name–there is so much of savor, of sweetness, of comfort, of healing, of life in that precious name of Jesus, that you cannot too often speak of it, or too frequently introduce it into all sorts of companies! I heard, some time ago, of a man handcuffed and being taken away by the police for a term of imprisonment–a horrible wretch with a face that was scarcely human, a man who seemed as if he was cut out for a murderer–and as he stood in the station and few cared even to look at him, a little girl went near and, looking up to him, said, “Poor man, I pity you.” He was wretch enough to utter some lewd and profane expression and the child, astonished, ran back to her father. But she could not stay long. There seemed to be a charm to her about that wicked man, so she ran into the room, again, and said, “Poor man, Jesus Christ pities you–He does!” The police said to the governor of the jail, when handing over their prisoner, “That man will give you a

world of trouble. He is the most horrible brute we ever came across, it took a great many of us to capture him."

The next morning he was found quiet and subdued–and during all the term of his imprisonment there was not a better prisoner! And he went out of the jail a changed man. He told the chaplain that it was the little girl who had done it when she said that she pitied him and that Jesus Christ pitied him. If we would more often bring in that blessed name of Jesus, then would our text be fulfilled, "I will bless you, and you shall be a blessing." Oh, that we would all first come to Him and find the blessing that is treasured up in Him–and then go forth and be a blessing to our own family and to all around us! O Lord, grant that it may be so, for Your dear Son's sake! Amen.

Ge 12:5 • Effectual Calling — Illustrated by the Call of Abram

SERMON 0843

E*ffectual Calling—Illustrated By The Call Of Abram*

"They went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came."

Genesis 12:5

IF you desire to know the character or a child, you will probably learn much about it from observing the father. The young bird flies and sings as its father did before it. If we would know the life of the child of faith, we should study the history of the "father of the faithful." Abraham, the man of faith, is a type of all believing men, and the narrative of his life, if rightly considered, is the mirror of the history of all the saints of God. The commencement of his career of faith, when he first became separated from his own

country and went into the land of Canaan, is a most instructive representation of our effectual calling–when we are, by a work of Omnipotent Grace, separated from the world, and made to obey the great precept, "Come you out from among them, be you separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters."

The life of the Believer is as Abram's was, a separated life, a life regulated by other affections than those which arise from the relationships of flesh and blood. It is a life of walking in the unseen, in which God's command, Presence and approval are paramount considerations. It is a life in which faith guides the soul, sitting like a pilot at the helm of the vessel. Abram denied the flesh, took up the cross, went outside the camp, became sanctified unto the Lord, and lived and died the friend of God and a stranger among men. The commencement of his separated life is a lively picture of the commencement of the same life in ourselves. The calling of Abram is a representation of our calling, and to that matter I shall ask your earnest attention this morning.

First, EFFECTUAL CALLING IS ILLUSTRATED IN THE CALL OF ABRAM. We have been reading the whole of the story and therefore I shall only need to refresh your memories with it. Read carefully the last verses of chapter 11, and the whole of chapter 12 and get the thread of the story. Abram's call was, in the first place, the result of the Sovereign Grace of God. The world, as

a whole, was lying in heathenism. Men had gradually gone astray from the one God to the worship of engraved images. Here and there there might be an exception, as in the case of a Job or a Melchisedec, but thick darkness covered the people.

God had determined that He would select one family which should afterwards grow into a distinct nation, to be the conservators of the true faith. Why He selected Abram, He Himself only knows, for we know that Terah, the father of Abram, had declined into the worship of false gods. “Your fathers,” Joshua tells us in his 24 th chapter, and second verse,“dwelt on the other side of the flood in old times, even Terah, the father of Abram, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.”

That family, if not quite so corrupt as the rest of mankind, had, at any rate, become corrupted. And we find the idols in the house of Laban, their descendant. Yet the Sovereign Grace of God pitched upon the household of Terah, and out of that favored family the Lord of Hosts made a Divine selection of the person of Abram. Why, I say again, why, remains in the inscrutable purposes of God, a thing unrevealed to us, though doubtless the choice was made by the Lord for the wisest and most God-like reasons. Abram was a man with faults. “A man, also, with many virtues,” you reply. Yes, but those virtues given to him by God’s Spirit, and not the cause of his election, but the result. He is an instance of theSovereignty of God carrying out the Divine declaration, “I will have mercy on

whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

The Prophets often spoke of Abraham as though the Lord's mercy to him was a matter to be admired, and they by no means ascribed his favored position to any personal merit in the Patriarch. "Look," says Isaiah, "unto the rock from where you are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from where you were dug. Look unto Abraham, your father, and unto Sarah that bore you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him." Here he is compared, as it were, to a quarry, or to a pit out of which the nation was dug, and to this pit they are bid to look as to a sight that will humble them–consequently, I gather–not to the merit of their fathers, but to the Grace of God.

And again, "A Syrian ready to perish, was your father." Called a Syrian, as if to show that by nature he was as others–and as the Syrians were idolaters, even was he. "A Syrian ready to perish," by which I understand not perishing with physical hunger or disease, but through spiritual darkness and declension from the true God. "Ready to perish," and yet the Eternal Mercy looked on him and saved him! Yes, whether men will accept it or not, that Truth of God stands fast, forever, that "whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called." Effectual calling in all

cases, follows the eternal purpose. Predestination, according to the Divine good pleasure, is the wellhead of all the Covenant blessings which the Believer enjoys–

"Never had you felt the guilt of sin,
Nor sweets of pardoning love,
Unless your worthless names had been
Enrolled to life above."

The call of Abram, in the next place, was Divinely applied and enforced. We neither read that an angel called him, nor a Prophet, nor that he came out of Ur of the Chaldeans by the motion of his own mind spontaneously. "The God of Glory appeared unto our father Abraham," says Stephen, in his dying address, "when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran." There was made to his mind a remarkable revelation of the existence and the Character of the one only true God–and then, after he had been enlightened so that he knew in his inmost soul the Existence and Glory of Jehovah–then the message came, perhaps in audible sounds, perhaps by a forcible impression upon his mind, "Get you out from your kindred and from your father's house."

Now mark that in every gracious call by which a man is truly saved, the call comes immediately from God Himself. Agents are generally used–the minister speaks, the Bible becomes a living light, the Providence is a warning which is not misunderstood–but neither minister, nor Bible, nor Providence can call a man

effectually apart from the direct manifestation of the Divine power in the heart of each individual. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, we may labor after souls, but until God puts His hand to the work, nothing is done!

Our calls to dead souls leave them still in their sleep, but the voice of Jesus brings Lazarus out of the tomb! I would have you who are listeners to the Truth of God never be satisfied with the use of merely the means. Look to the God of the means! Ask Him to reveal His arm and the power of His Grace in you. And never be content with that which only penetrates to the outward ear, or abides upon a merely verbal memory–but ask that it may go into the heart and abide in the innermost spirit through the effectual working of God the Holy Spirit. "Christ in you" is the power of God, but there must be an inward receiving of Him by the Holy Spirit, or all will be in vain! There must be a supernatural work, or you cannot be saved.

Much as I wish to preach a free salvation, I cannot forget that, "you must be born-again," and, "no man can come to Christ except the Father draw him." Mere nature at its best falls short of eternal life–its bow is too weak to shoot to the mark–its puny arm too feeble to work so Divine a change! Effectual calling, then, springs from the Divine purpose and is worked by Divine energy. Dear Hearers, be this your prayer to the Lord who alone can save you–

"With softening pity look,

And melt my hardness down.
Strike with Your love's resistless stroke,
And break this heart of stone!"

In the case of Abram, again, the call was personal, and it grew more personal as it proceeded. At first, when Abram was called in Ur of the Chaldeans, he probably thought that he could persuade Terah, his father, and the rest of the family to accompany him. And he appears to have prevailed to a degree, for they went as far as Haran. But there, for reasons not known, the family stopped for a long time. How frequently it is so with us! When God begins to work in our souls we would gladly have others go with us, and we are led, perhaps ourselves, to make a kind of compromise with them to stop half-way if they will come half-way. We vainly conceive that we may bring all of them to feel and act as we do, whereas if the effectual call does not come to them as it does to us, there must be a division.

Love may wish otherwise, but carnal nature and the renewed spirit cannot agree–the Lord has set a difference–and we must still expect to see Him take one of a city and two of a family and bring them to Zion, while others refuse to come. After awhile the message came to Abram again, "Get you out from your kindred," not with your kindred, "and from your father's house." And so Abram, this time, is obliged to leave Haran, the halting-place, and to push forward resolutely and finally for Canaan.

Beloved, you and I, if ever we are to be the Lord's, must have a distinct personal call. All the hearing of the Gospel in which I listen for other people, and am but one of a crowd, comes to nothing. But when I hearken for myself and the Truth of God comes home to me, describing my case, revealing my misery, inspiring my desire, enkindling my hope–then it is that it becomes the power of God unto salvation to my spirit! O dear Hearer, I beseech you individualize yourself! Put yourself, even in this great throng, into a mental solitude and let the voice of God come to you, even to you, like the bean dropped into the hole in the earth which the farmer has dug on purpose for it–that there it may swell and germinate and bring forth fruit! Nothing but a direct, distinct personal call coming home to heart and conscience will be of any avail!

This call to Abram was a call for separation. The separation must have been exceedingly painful to him, for it was so complete. "Get you out of your country"–expatriate yourself. Be an alien, a stranger, and a foreigner. "Get you out from your kindred." Let the ties of Nature yield to the ties of Divine Grace. Form new relations and yield to bonds that are not of the flesh. "Get you from your father's house," from the place of comfort and rest, the place of heir-ship and affection. Acknowledge another father, and seek another house. "Get you unto a land that I will show you," which you could not find by yourself, but which I must reveal to you.

Observe, then, the effectual call, wherever it comes to a man, is a separating sword, cutting him off from old associations. It makes him feel that this world is not his country. He lives in it as a stranger lives in a foreign land. He is in the world, but he is not of it. The Apostle says,“ Our citizenship is in Heaven.” We become citizens of another city and are aliens in these cities of earth. For Christ’s sake the Christian man is therefore obliged to be separated in many respects from such of his family and kindred as remain in their sins. They are living according to the flesh. They are seeking this world. Their pleasure is here, their comfort below the skies. The man who is called by Divine Grace lives in the same house, but lives not under the influence of the same motives–nor is he ruled by the same desires.

He is so different from others that very soon they find him out, and, as Ishmael mocked Isaac, so the sons of the world mock the children of the Resurrection. The call of Grace, the more it is heard the more it completes the separation. At first, with some Believers, they only go part of the way in nonconformity to the world. They are only partly conformed to Jesus Christ’s image and partly led out of worldly influences. Indeed, this is the case with most of us! But as we ripen in the things of God, our decision for God becomes more complete, our obedience to the Law of Christ becomes more perfect and there is a greater division set between us and the world.

Oh, I wish that all Christians would believe this great Truth of God, and carry it out, that, “you are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world.” To try to be a worldly Christian or a Christian worldling is to attempt an impossible thing! “You cannot serve God and mammon.” “If God is God serve Him, and if Baal is god serve him.” Whichever is the true and the right, give your heart to it–but attempt no compromises. The very essence of the Christian faith is being separate from the world! Not the separation of the monastic life–we are neither monks nor nuns, nor would God have us be so! Jesus Christ was a Man among men, eating and drinking as others did, professing no asceticism, never separating Himself from the rest of mankind, but a Man among men to perfection! Yet how separate from sinners was He! He was as distinct a Man from all others as though He had been an angel among a troop of devils. So must you and I be.

Go to the farm or to the merchandise, to the family and to the mart, but with all your mingling with mankind, still mingle not in their principles nor yield obedience to the demon that rules them! “I pray not,” says our Lord, “that You would take them out of the world, but that You would keep them from the Evil One.” Being kept from the Evil One, you will be carrying out spiritually what Abram did literally–you will be coming out from your kindred and your father’s house under the influence of the effectual call. The call of Abram was made effectual in his heart and will, and I call

your attention, for a minute, to his obedience to it. It was an obedience which involved, in his case, great sacrifice. It must have been hard to tear himself away from his kinsfolk.

At first, indeed, it seemed to have been too hard for him, for he stopped with his father, Terah, till he died at Haran. Brethren, it is no child's play to be a Christian. "If any man loves father or mother more than Me," says Christ, "he is not worthy of Me." In many cases the greatest foes to religion are our best friends. Many a man has found his soul's worst enemy lying in his bosom. Many a child has found that the father who nourished its body has done his best to destroy its soul. "A man's foes shall be they of his own household," says Christ. But no relationship is to stand in the way of our obedience to Christ. The fondest connection must sooner be severed than we must give up the faithfulness of our loyalty to our great Lord and King.

Take heed that you form no new association which may take you aside from Him. Be warned, Christian men and women, against being unequally yoked together with unbelievers–either in marriage or in any form of partnership–for it will bring you grievous sorrow. Let none but those who are in the favor of God be in your favor. And as you would not wish to be separated eternally from the beloved of your bosom, take care that you do not begin a union with those who are already separate from Christ Jesus your Lord! But if, being converted, you find yourself in connection and

relationship with the ungodly, as may be very probably the case, love them! Love them more than you ever did! Be kinder than ever, more affectionate than ever–so that you may win them!

But never submit yourself to sin to please them, nor pollute the chastity of your heart, which belongs to Christ alone. Whatever it may cost you, if you are truly called by Divine Grace, come out and leave all behind. Sing with Jane Taylor–

"You tempting sweets, forbear.
You dearest idols, fall.
My love you must not share,
Jesus shall have it all.
Though painful and acute the smart,
His love can heal the bleeding heart!"

It must have required, in Abram's case, much faith to be so obedient. He set out to find a land which he had never seen. He is only told in which way to steer, and God will show him where it is. Remember that in those olden times a journey such as Abram took was a much more formidable thing than now. Those venerable men were rooted to the soil in which they grew. We can make a journey to America or Australia and think but little of it–but even our grandfathers thought it a most awful thing to go out of the county in which they lived–they looked upon it as going to the moon if any talked of emigrating to a foreign country!

The further back you go you will discover a greater tenacity in men holding them to family roots. Well, Abram must be uprooted! At more than 70 years of age he must become an emigrant! He might have asked what kind of country, but he did not–it is enough for him that God appoints the journey–and away the pilgrim goes. So, Beloved, we must always unhesitatingly follow the guidance of our heavenly Father. If we are called by Divine Grace, we shall have abundant need to exercise faith. If you could understand the dealings of God with you. If everything went smoothly. If in all respects you prospered as the result of your religion, you might fear that you were not in the track of the people of God, for their track is marked with tribulations! It is through much tribulation that they inherit the kingdom. But if it requires all the faith that you can summon, and more, yet still hold on, for the promise of God will justify itself in the long run!

If God bids you do a thing, though it should seem to be the greatest folly conceivable, yet do it and the wisdom of God will glorify itself in your experience. I must still keep you for a few minutes longer attentive to Abram's obedience, for I want you to notice that while it involved much loss and required a vast amount of faith, yet it was based upon a very great promise–a promise most vast and unexampled. All were to be blessed who blessed him, and he was to become a blessing to the whole universe! Here is a strong inducement to obey, if faith can but believe the promise is true.

And, Brothers and Sisters, when we venture for Christ's sake to strike out into the path of separation, and to walk by faith, what a multitude of promises we have to cheer us onward–"Certainly I will be with you." "No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly." "Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." "I will never leave you nor forsake you." "He that believes in Him shall never be confused." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "For all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Behold, Brothers and Sisters, the crown which is held forth to you! It is no other than everlasting life! Behold your reward! It is the city whose gates are pearls, and whose streets are gold! Your unrivalled portion is bliss ineffable–to be with Christ–to dwell with Him in ecstatic bliss, world without end. Be of good courage, then, since for all you lose by following Jesus you shall obtain a hundred-fold in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting! Be of good courage if you forsake the world and lose friends for Truth's sake–you shall obtain the friendship of immortal spirits, angels shall become your servitors, and the blood-washed shall be your Brethren–Christ Himself will be your Friend, and God your Father.

Onward you may well proceed if you can but believe the promise is true! You have everything to gain, and that which you have to lose compared with it is less than nothing. The present light

affliction incident to a godly life is not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in you! See, then, Brothers and Sisters, and rejoice as you see it–if we have Abraham's difficulties we also have Abram's encouragements.

Now, having thus shown you what this effectual calling is, and the obedience it brings, I would only remind you that Abram never stopped until he actually arrived at Canaan. And so a child of God, when effectually called by Divine Grace, never gets peace or rest until he lays hold on Jesus, and so by believing enters into rest. Abram may be held up as an example to us in obeying the Divine call because he went at once. He did not pause to ask a single question. He was bid to go to Canaan, and to Canaan he went. He did his work very thoroughly–he set out for Canaan, and to Canaan he came. Having once left Haran, he did, as it were, burn the bridges behind him.

He had given up all thoughts of ever returning again. If he had wished to return, he could have done so, the Apostle tells us. But he had given up, forever, all his old associations. He was bound for the promised kingdom, and on to the kingdom and the unseen blessing would he speed. O that God's Spirit may call every one of us after this same fashion and give us Grace to be obedient in the same style and to declare that if we had to give up all we have, and even life itself, yet without hesitation it should be done, for Jesus leads the way!–

“The God of Abraham praise,
At whose supreme command,
From earth I rise, and seek the joys
At His right hand.
I all on earth forsake,
Its wisdom, fame, and power,
And Him my only portion make,
My shield and tower.
He by Himself has sworn,
I on His oath depend.
I shall, on eagles' wings upborne,
To Heaven ascend.
I shall behold His face,
I shall His power adore,
And sing the wonders of His Grace
Forevermore.”

For a minute, I beg you to observe the difference between the Lord’s effectual call and those common calls which so many receive. Brethren, there are many here, I fear, who have been called to glory and immortality, but the calling was of man and by man. Perhaps some of us who are professors have been called not by the Grace of God, but by the eloquence of a speaker, or by the excitement of a revival meeting. Beware, I pray you, of that river whose source lies not at the foot of the Throne of God. Take care of

that salvation which does not take its rise in the work of God the Holy Spirit, for only that which comes from Him will lead to Him. The work which does not spring from eternal love will never land us in eternal life.

The call of many men is such that when it comes to them they raise many questions as to whether they shall obey it or not. The Truth of God was earnestly and pathetically spoken, and they cannot help feeling somewhat of its power, but Lot's wife they look back and perish! Like Pliable, they travel as far as the Slough of Despond, but they like not the miry way and therefore they scamper out on the side nearest home and go back again to the City of Destruction. Many have I known who have had a call of a certain sort who have tried to go to Canaan and yet to stop at Haran. They would gladly serve God and yet live as they used to live.

They think it possible to be a Christian and yet to be a servant of the world! They attempt the huge impossibility of yoking the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the lion of the pit in the same chariot–and driving through the streets of life. Ah, Sirs, the call which comes from God brings a man right out–while the call which only comes to your fleshly nature leaves you with the rest of mankind, and will leave you there to be bound up in the same bundle with sinners and cast into the same fire! Many come out of Egypt but never arrive at Canaan. Like the children of Israel who left their carcasses in the

wilderness, their hearts are not sound towards the Lord. They start fairly, but the taste of the garlic and the onions lingers in their mouth and holds their minds by Egypt's fleshpots.

Like the planets, they are affected by two impulses–one would draw them to Heaven, but another would drive them off at a tangent to the world–and so they revolve, like the mill-horse, without making progress. They continue, still, to nominally fear the Lord and yet to serve other gods practically and in their hearts. Beware, dear Friends, of the call which makes you set out but does not lead you to hold out. Pray that this text may be true to you, "They went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and to the land of Canaan they came."

Do not be content with praying to be saved–never be satisfied until you are saved. Do not be content with trying to believe and trying to repent–come to Christ and both repent and believe–and give no slumber to your eyelids till you are a penitent Believer. Make a full and complete work of your believing! Strive not to reach the strait gate, but to enter it. For this you must have a call from the Lord of Heaven. I can call you as I have called many of you dozens of times, and you have gone a little way, and you have bid fair to go the whole way–but when your goodness has been as a morning cloud and as the early dew, it soon has been scattered and has gone. God grant you to receive the call of His Eternal Spirit, that you may be saved!

II. There are a few minutes remaining which I shall occupy by changing the subject. If our text may very well illustrate effectual calling, so may it PICTURE FINAL PERSEVERANCE. “They went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and to the land of Canaan they came.” That is true of every child of God who is really converted and receives the faith of God’s elect.

Oh, that miserable doctrine which says that the saints set out for Canaan but never reach the place! It is enough to make a Believer’s life a very Hell upon earth! No matter how happy I might be, that doctrine would poison all my peace of mind. The doctrine which denies that the pilgrims to Glory go from strength to strength until every one of them in Zion appears before God, but which teaches that sheep of Christ may be torn by the wolves–that the stones in the spiritual temple may be scattered to the four winds, that the members of Christ may be torn away from His sacred body, and that the spouse of Christ may be mutilated–I say it shocks my reason, my experience, my faith, my entire spiritual nature!

I believe in the final perseverance of every man in whom the regenerating Grace of God has worked a change of nature. If he has been born of God he cannot die! If the living Seed is in Him the devil cannot destroy it, for it lives and abides forever! Because Christ lives, every Believer who is one with Jesus must live also! We set forth, then, to the land of Canaan, and, blessed be God, to the land of Canaan we shall come! God has purposed it. He

purposes that the many sons should all be brought to Glory by the Captain of their salvation. And has He said it and shall He not do it? We shall reach our resting place, for the Armor-Bearer who leads the way is no other than Jesus Christ, the Covenant Angel, mighty to save! We shall be preserved, for round about us is a wall of fire, and above us is the shield of the Eternal and Immutable, even of Jehovah, whose love is everlasting!

The way shall not weary us–He shall give us shoes of iron and brass, and as our days so shall our strength be. The roughness of the road shall not cast us down–He will bear us as upon eagles' wings–He will give His angels charge over us, lest we dash our foot against a stone. The arrows of Hell shall not destroy us, for He gives us armor of proof–there shall no evil befall us. The snares of the devil shall not entrap us, for His wisdom shall surely make a way of escape out of every temptation that shall happen to His children. Glory be to God, it is not in the power of earth and Hell put together to stop a single one of the Lord's pilgrims from reaching the Celestial City!

"Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" "I am persuaded that He which has begun a good work in you, will carry it on." "For the path of the just is as the shining light which shines more and more unto the perfect day."–

"Each object of His love is sure
To reach the heavenly goal,

For neither sin nor Satan can
Destroy the blood-washed soul.
Satan may vex, and unbelief
The saved one may annoy,
But he must conquer; yes, as sure
As Jesus reigns in joy,
The precious blood of
God's dear Son
Shall never be spilt in vain!
The soul on Christ believing, must
With Christ forever reign."

As you turn over this text, (this afternoon), I should like you to think of these three things–We have set forth for the land of Canaan–we know where we are going. Think much of your haven of rest. Study that precious Scripture which reveals the new Jerusalem. Be familiar with angelic harps. Come unto the general assembly and Church of the first-born. Let your Sabbath contemplations be of the everlasting Sabbath so soon to dawn.

In the next place, we know why we are going. We are going to Canaan because God has called us to go. He gives us strength to go and puts the life-force within us that makes us tend upward towards the eternal dwelling place, the happy harbor of the saints. And we know that we are going–that is another mercy. We do not hope we are going to Heaven, we know that we are going there! Christ is the

road. The banner of love leads us. The fiery cloudy pillar of Providence directs us. The promise sustains us. The Holy Spirit dwells in us–of all this we are confident. Blessed be God, we doubt not these things!

Notice two or three thoughts in this text worth remembering. "They went forth." Energetic action! Men are not saved while they are asleep. No riding to Heaven on feather beds! "They went forth to the land of Canaan." Intelligent perception! They knew what they were doing. They did not go to work in a blundering manner, not understanding their drift. We must know Christ if we would be found in Him. It must be given us to look to Him, and trust to Him, understanding what is meant by so doing. Men are not to be saved through the blindness of an ignorant superstition. "They went forth to the land of Canaan, and to the land of Canaan they came." Firm resolution! They could put up with rebuffs, but they would not be put off from their resolves. They meant Canaan, and Canaan they would get. He that would be saved must take Heaven by violence. "To the land of Canaan they came." Perfect perseverance! "He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved." Not a spurt and a rest, but constant running wins the race. All these thoughts cluster around the one idea of final perseverance which the text brings out.

But, ah, dear Friends, how many there are who set out to go to Canaan, but unto Canaan they come not! Some are stopped by the first depression of spirits that they meet with. Like Pliable they run

home with the mud of Despond on their boots. Others turn aside to self-righteousness. They follow the directions of Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and resort to Doctor Legality, or Mr. Civility–and Sinai falls upon them and crushes them. Some turn to the right hand with Hypocrisy, thinking that to pretend to be holy will be as good as being so. Others go on the left hand to Formality, imagining that sacraments and outward rites will be as effectual as inward purity and the work of the Spirit in their hearts.

Many fall down the silver mine where Demas broke his neck. Hundreds get into Despair's castle and leave their bones there because they will not trust Christ and so obtain eternal life. Some go far, apparently, but, like Ignorance they never really go, and when they come to the river they perish at the very last. Some, like Turn-Away, become apostates, and are dragged away by the back door to Hell after all their professions. Some are frightened by the lions. Some are tempted by By-Path Meadow. Some would be saved but they must make a fortune. Many would be saved but they cannot bear to be laughed at.

Some would trust Christ, but they cannot endure His Cross. Many would wear the crown, but they cannot bear the labor by which they must attain it. Ah, you sons of men, you will turn aside to Madame Wanton, and to Madame Bubble! You will be bewitched with this, and that, and the other which ensures your destruction, but the beauties of the glorious Savior, the lasting joys, the real

happiness which He has to give, these are too high for you! They are above you, and you reach not after them–or if you seek them for awhile, the dog returns to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

The stone thrown up mounts not to Heaven, for the attraction of earth brings it back again. O that God would be pleased to send Divine Grace into our hearts from His own Holy Spirit that we, too, might set out in the spirit of humility in confidence in Christ, in the power of the Spirit to the land of Canaan and to the land of Canaan may we truly come, and the Lord shall have the praise! Amen.

Ge 14:18-20 • Jesus Meeting His Warriors

SERMON 0589

Jesus Meeting His Warriors

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the Most High God. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of Heaven and earth: and blessed be the Most High God, which has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he gave him tithes of all."

Genesis 14:18-20

What a splendid type is Abram, in the narrative before us, of our Lord Jesus Christ! Let us read this story of Abram in connection with our Savior and see how full of meaning it is. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the abundance of His love, had taken us to be His

brothers. But we, through our sin, had gone into the land of Sodom and Jesus Christ dwelt alone in His safety and His happiness, enjoying the Presence of God. The hosts of our enemies, with terrible force and cruel fury, carried us away captives. We were violently borne away, with all the goods which we possessed, into a land of forgetfulness and captivity forever.

Christ, who had lost nothing by this, nevertheless being a "brother born for adversity," pursued our haughty foes. He overtook them. He struck them with His mighty hand–He took their spoil and returned with crimsoned vesture, leading captivity captive. He restored that which He took not away. I think, as I see Abram returning from the slaughter of the four kings, I see in him a picture of a greater than Abram, returning "from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, traveling in the greatness of His strength" who answers to my inquiry of who is he? "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Abram was that righteous man raised in the East, to whom God gave his enemies as driven stubble to his bow.

And so the Lord Jesus has driven our enemies like chaff over to the wind, for they fled at the Presence of Jehovah Jesus, and by the valor of the atoning Lamb they have been utterly broken in pieces forever. Let that thought dwell with you–it may furnish you with matter for meditation at your leisure. We shall this morning rather consider Abram as the type and picture of all the faithful. He was

the father of the faithful. And in his history you have condensed–as I think–history of all faithful men. You will scarcely find a trial which will befall you which has not in some respect happened to Abraham.

I will not say that he was tempted in all points like as we are, but he was tempted in so many points that he well deserves to be called the father of the faithful–being partaker of flesh and blood even as all the children are who belong to his faithful family. Observe then, in handling our subject in this manner, that Believers are frequently engaged in warfare. Notice, secondly, that when they are thus engaged they may expect to be met by their Lord, the great Melchizedek! And remember, thirdly, that when they are favored with an interview with Him and are refreshed by Him as with bread and wine, then, like Abram, they consecrate themselves anew and as Abram gave tithes of all, even so do they.

We mention, then, what you must all know right well by experience–you who are God's people–that the Believer is often engaged in warfare. This warfare will be both within and without–within with the innumerable natural corruptions which remain–with the temptations of Satan, with the suggestions of his own wicked heart. And without he will frequently be engaged in warfare, wrestling "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

The peculiar case of Abram leads me to remark that sometimes the Believer will be engaged in warfare, not so much on his own account as on the account of erring Brethren who, having gone into ill company, are by-and-by carried away captive. It was no quarrel of Abram's–it was Lot's matter. Lot had gone to Sodom. Instead of standing in the separated path of the true Believer he had joined himself to the world. And when evil days came Lot was carried away captive with the rest.

Abram cared little enough for the king of Sodom–I do not suppose he would have taken his sword from the sheath for all the men who dwelt in Admah or Zeboim. But for Lot's sake, seeing him in ill company and in danger, he draws the sword. And sometimes, Brethren, when we see those who are God's servants putting themselves into alliance with evil systems, we find them carried away captive and taken where we believe their hearts would never go. And so we feel compelled to come out and draw the sword against the common enemy of Christ and of all His people. And though they may heartily wish that we would let them alone in their sin and let them be quiet in their evil union, we see into what spiritual capacity it leads them and we cannot be silent. We must draw the sword when conscience and when God demand it and never sheath it until God's work is done.

However, this rarely occurs. For the most part the Christian spends his sword's edge upon his own spiritual foes–and truly we

have enough of these. What with pride, sloth, lust–what with the arch enemy of souls and his insinuations and blasphemies–the lust of the eyes, the pleasures of this world and the pride of life–what with enemies who come upon us even from Providence in the shape of temptations arising out of our trials and our vocations, we ought to carry our sword always drawn! And, above all, we should ever carry the shield of faith and take the weapon of all-prayer.

The Christian is never to feel himself at ease so long as he is on this side of Jordan. This is an enemy's land. Expect a foe behind every bush. Look to hear the shot come whistling by and each night adore almighty Grace that you have not fallen prey to your cruel and remorseless foes. The Christian is engaged throughout his whole life as a soldier–he is so called in Scripture–"A good soldier of Jesus Christ." And if any of you take the trouble to write out the passages of Scripture in which the Christian is described as a soldier and provision is made for his being armed and directions given for his warfare, you will be surprised to find there are more of this character than concerning any other metaphor by which the Christian is described in the Word of God!

His chief and main business seems to be, like his Master, to bear witness for the Truth of God. "For this purpose was I born and sent into the world." And though in himself a man of peace, yet he can say with his Master, "I came not to send peace but a sword." Wherever he goes he finds that his presence is the signal for war–

war within him and war outside him–he is a man of peace and yet a man of war because a man of peace. The Christian is engaged in warfare with sin, Satan, error and falsehood and sometimes he is called to fight for erring friends.

Observe that this war is one against powerful odds. The four kings mentioned in this chapter were all great sovereigns. From what little we can glean from profane history, they appear to have been very mighty monarchs and they must have been assisted by very valiant armies to have struck the giants whose names are mentioned in the opening verses. They appear to have carried away the five kings of the plain with the greatest possible ease. Yet here is Abram, who has little more than three hundred of his own armed servants at his call–and yet he ventures against the embattled thousands of the kings of nations!

Such is the warfare of the Christian–he has to contend against foes far too many for him–he is like the worm that is to arise and thrash the mountain. He is little and despised and if he measures his own strength he will find it to be perfect weakness. And yet, for all this, he anticipates a victory and like Abram hastens to the holy war. Carefully notice that as it is a battle of fearful odds, it is one which is carried on in faith. Abram did not venture to this fight with confidence in his own strength, or reliance upon his own bow. He went in the name of the Lord of Hosts. Faith was Abram's continual comfort. Sometimes his faith failed, as it will in the best,

but still, the spirit of the man's life was a simple confidence upon God–whom he had not seen–but whose voice he cheerfully obeyed.

The Christian is to carry on his warfare in faith. You will be vanquished, indeed, if you attempt it by any other method! Brethren, there is not a sin in your heart which will not master you if you seek to fight it by resolutions of your own. Faith in the precious blood of Christ must win you the victory and the world will laugh you to scorn if you assail it with any other weapons than such as Calvary will furnish you. "This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith." And if you ask Faith what weapon she uses, her reply is, "They overcame through the blood of the Lamb." Live near to Jesus Christ. Rest upon the power of His Atonement and the prevalence of His plea–and then go forward against every enemy without and every foe within–and you shall be more than a conqueror!

In this great battle, carried on by faith, Abram had a right given him from God and the promise of God's Presence virtually in that right. What business had Chedorlaomer to come to Canaan? Had not Jehovah said to Abram, "All this land will I give unto you"? Therefore he and his confederate monarchs were neither more nor less than intruders. For thirteen years they might have exercised sovereignty over the cities of the plain, but those cities and everything around them belonged virtually to Abram. It is true they would have laughed at the very idea of Abram's claiming the whole

land of Canaan, but that claim was nevertheless valid in the court of Heaven and the Patriarch, by Divine right, was heir of all the land.

Christian, you are, by virtue of a Covenant made with you to drive out every sin as an intruder. “Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the Law, but under Grace.” You are to drive out every error, for you are a servant of the Truth of God and the Truth alone has a right to live and a right to exist. And in fighting this lawful warfare you may expect that the right arm of the Most High God–the Possessor of Heaven and earth–will be bared that He may show Himself strong on behalf of all those who are valiant for His Truth and for His name. Fear not! The battle is not yours, but God’s. You go not to a warfare at your own charges. And though Hell may roar, as it will, and earth be all in arms–and your own heart may fail you and your flesh, when you take counsel with it, makes you feel a coward–yet say, “In the name of God will I destroy them,” and go forward and conquer! “They compass me about like bees,” said David, “yes, like bees they compass me about: but in the name of God will I destroy them.” And what David did you shall do through David’s God!

Yet more–the Christian is engaged in a conflict in which he walks by faith and leans upon God. But yet it is a conflict in which he uses all means, calls in all lawful assistance and exerts himself with all vigor and speed. Abram did not sit still and say, “Well, God will

deliver Lot. He has promised to keep His servants as the apple of His eye." Oh, no, that is not faith–that is foolish presumption! Abram did not take his time about it and go marching leisurely after the foe, nor did he go without the assistance of his friends, Aner and Eshcol and Mamre. So the Christian, if he sees any method by which he may be assisted in overcoming sin or promoting the Truth of God, uses it with wisdom and discretion. He trusts in God as though he did nothing himself and yet he does everything as if all depended upon himself. He knows that good works cannot save him and he equally knows that he is not saved unless there are some fruits of good works.

He understands that the means of Grace cannot of themselves convey Grace to him and yet at the same time he never despises them but looks to find a blessing in the use of them. He understands that the ministry and private prayer and the searching of the Scriptures cannot save him–but he also understands that thus using them helps which God has given him and diligently pressing forward and setting a bold face before the foe–he is in the path of God's ordinances and may expect to have God's help. And do observe, dear Friends, yet again, that Abram marching on thus with activity and using discretion–by attacking his enemies at night rather than by day–did not cease until he had gained a complete victory over them.

It was not enough to strike them at one corner of their host, nor merely to deliver Lot. Now that he is come out against them he will win a sure and decisive victory. O Beloved, you and I are never to sit still and say, “It is enough.” Have I struck my drunkenness? Have I overcome by blaspheming habits? Am I delivered from Sabbath-breaking? Have I become honest and chaste? Yet this is not where I should stop. Have I sought to bring down my self-conceit, my pride, my sloth? It is well and good but let me never be satisfied with any attainment short of absolute perfection. We do not believe we shall be perfect in this life, but we will never be satisfied until we are. “Onward,” is the Christian’s motto! As long as there is one sin which is not removed we will fight and cry and groan and go to the Cross concerning it.

As long as there is one soul in this world unsaved, we will wrestle with the Mighty One of Jacob to stretch out His hand to save it! So long as there remains one error upon earth–so long as we have a tongue to speak and God gives us Grace–we will bear our witness against it. In this battle there is no keeping back our hand till the victory is wholly won. We must bring back the goods and the men and the women and Lot and the whole company–the victory must be complete. More than conquerors must we be through Him who has loved us. Let us anticipate the time when it shall be so.

O Brethren, I think I see the victors ascending the starry steeps in triumphal state! Christ at their head rides gloriously! He who loved

them leads the van. The gates open to Him as the great Conqueror who has led their captivity captive. I think I see the glad faces of all those soldiers of the Cross as they enter the portals of eternal peace–

"I ask them where their victory came.
They with united breath,
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to His death."

See, then, Beloved, you are this morning soldiers! You are to fight by faith in God. However tremendous the power of your adversaries, you are not to fear since God is with you. You are to fight using discretion as your armor-bearer, but you are also to couple this with perseverance, continuing faithful to the end, for only those who overcome shall sit upon the Throne of God forever!

We have thus, perhaps, said enough concerning this first point and now may the Holy Spirit bedew with His holy influences while we talk of the second, for otherwise it will be only talk.

II. While engaged in such earnest spiritual contention the Believer may expect to see his Lord. When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were fighting Christ's battles in the fiery furnace, then the Son of Man appeared to them. As in the building of Jerusalem in troublous times they had the sword in one hand and the trowel in the other, so our Lord Jesus Christ, while He teaches us to use the sword, takes care to edify and build us up in the faith at the same

time! He understands that warriors require strengthening meat and that especially when they are under stern conflict they need extraordinary comforts that their souls may be stayed and refreshed.

Why does Jesus Christ, as set forth here under the type of Melchizedek, appear unto His children in times of conflict? Answer–He comes to them, first, because they are weary. In every conflict which the child of God has to wage, it is not the private person who goes to the warfare–it virtually is Christ fighting–Christ contending. It is a member of Christ's body laboring against Christ's enemy for the glory of the Head. Christ the Head has an intense feeling of sympathy with every member, no matter how humble. Since there is a vital union between Christ and every member, there is also an undying sympathy. And whenever, Brothers and Sisters, you contend for the faith till you grow weary, Jesus Christ will be sure to give you some proof of His close communion with you.

The martyrs proclaim that they never had such communion with God anywhere as among the caverns of the hills, or the swamps of the woods to which they were exiled for Christ. And even on the rack, in extremity of torture, or even upon the gridiron in the heat of the fire–even there the sweet Presence of Christ has been overpoweringly delightful to them so that they almost lost the sense of pain! You, Lord, do send a plenteous rain whereby You refresh

Your heritage when it is weary! Spend your strength for God, Brothers and Sisters, for when fainting seems inevitable, then shall come such a sweet renewing of your strength that, like an eagle, you shall stretch your wings and mount aloft to commune with God in solitary joys! Christ, your Melchizedek, will meet you in your conflicts if He never did before!

The King of Peace met the returning warrior for another reason. Abram was probably flushed with victory and this is a very dangerous feeling for any child of God. When the seventy disciples returned to Christ they said, with evident exultation, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us." But Jesus Christ sweetly and gently rebuked them by saying, "Nevertheless, rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." The true secret of a Christian's joy is not to be his conquest over sin or over error, but the Person of his Lord Jesus Christ! The Lord knows that His people, if they are successful even in spiritual warfare–when they have used the best of means and felt the best of motives–are, nevertheless, very liable to the intoxication of pride. And therefore He either sends "a thorn in the flesh," or else, what is better still, He comes Himself!

I am persuaded, Beloved, that the best cure for pride is a sight of Christ. Oh, when your eyes see Him, then your own loathsomeness, blackness and deformity are clearly revealed. I am fair until I see the sun–then–then am I black, indeed! I think myself pure until I

see Him whiter than any fuller could make Him and then I fall down and cry, “Unclean, unclean, unclean!” “Now my eye sees You,” said Job, “why I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Down go your flaunting banners and your lofty plumes when you have a sight of Christ! No humbler man than George Herbert–no humbler man than Samuel Rutherford–and these were men who lived close to Christ. Christ’s Presence is a cure-all.

When Melchizedek comes every spiritual disease flies before Him. The Church at Laodicean was very far gone and how did the Master propose to cure it? Here it is–“Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into him and will sup with him.” What? Lord, is this Your delightful treatment of Your sick Church? “Yes, My communion with you, poor lukewarm Laodicean, will revive you.” Truly that is a most suggestive figure by which John describes the countenance of Christ–he says, “His countenance was as the sun shining in his strength.” So, Lord, it does not matter how dark I am, the moment You show Your face, all must be light! This, I think, was the reason why the King of Righteousness met Abram–to turn away his thoughts from the tempting joys of victory to his sure portion in the Most High God, possessor of Heaven and earth.

Yet again, was not this visit bestowed because Abram was about to be tried in a yet more subtle manner than he had been before? It is easier to fight Chedorlaomer than to resist the King of Sodom.

Joshua down in the plain never grew weary when he was fighting the Amalekites, but Moses on the mountain felt his hands grow heavy. Why? Because the more spiritual the exercise, the more apt are we to grow weary in it. And so the more spiritual the temptation the more likelihood of our becoming a prey to it and the more strength do we need to overcome it. That was a very subtle temptation to Lot, by the King of Sodom. Why it looked so right–perfectly right. Abram has brought back these captives–he has a right to the spoil–he ought, therefore, to take it. If he had done so, no one would blame him on ordinary rules. But there is a higher rule for Believers than for other men!

Brethren, I contend that the common rules of morality are binding upon all–but that a supernaturally high rule of morality should regulate the Christian! The Christian is not allowed to wink at an evil because he has educated his conscience not to think it so–but he shall so act that there shall not be any wrong in the action upon the common judgment of any unbiased spectator. He who is of the King's Council must walk very daintily lest he offend his Master. I tell you, from experience, that the nearer you come to Christ and the more you have of communion with Him, the more jealous you must be of yourself, or else, if other men escape the rod you will not–you will have to smart for it behind the door where another may not see nor understand your grief.

Beloved, it is well to have communion with Christ to prepare us against subtle temptations, for to feed us upon Melchizedek's bread and wine is to make us more than a match for the King of Sodom. O Jesus! When I have seen Your face, my soul beholds not the dazzling beauties of earthly excellence. Brothers and Sisters, if ever you have seen Christ's face, that painted harlot, the world, will never win your love again! Did you ever eat the pure white bread of Heaven? Then the brown gritty bread of earth will never suit you but will break your teeth with gravel stones. You will never care to drink earth's sour and watery wine if you have once been made to drink of the wines on the lees well refined–the spiced wine of Christ's pomegranate. If you want to be strengthened against the most subtle worldly temptations, cry, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Your love is better than wine." And you may go forth to conflicts of every kind more than a conqueror, through Him that has loved you!

Thus we have spoken upon the fact that Melchizedek met Abram and the reasons. Now, let us look a little more closely at what he did. In what character did he meet Abram? The reply is easy–he met him as one possessed of a royal priesthood. Christ meets us, Brethren, as a Priest and a King in all our battles. What a mercy it is that Christ visits us as a Priest, for we never fight against sin without being in some measure partakers of it. I do not believe there ever was a controversy for the Truth of God upon which any

gracious man, though engaged upon the right side, could look back without some regrets and some tears.

I much believe that even Martin Luther or John Knox, when upon their dying beds, though never regretting that they contended earnestly for the faith yet felt that while they were in the flesh something of flesh mingled with all that they did. Thus it will be to the end and even when contending against our own sins and lusts. Yet, Beloved, our very repentance has something in it to be repented of and our very flying to the Cross has something in it of a lingering from the Cross and therefore something of evil. Jesus, all hail! How much I need to meet You as a priest! And you, Beloved, do you not feel that you need Him, too? Do you not, as you look upon Calvary and the flowing blood, confess that you need, in all spiritual conflicts, to meet Christ?

But Melchizedek was also a king and truly thus we want to view our Lord whenever we are fighting His battles. “The Lord reigns,” is perhaps one of the most comforting texts in the compass of God’s Word to the contending Christian. “Ah,” says the poor soul, “I am trod under foot of Satan, but rejoice not over me, O my enemy–though I fall, yet shall I rise again, for the Lord reigns!” Oh, that is our consolation when at any time we think we are routed! When we see our Church dismayed and our banner trailed in the mire–we then remember Jesus, for Him has God the Father exalted, “and given Him a name which is above every name: that at

the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven and things in earth and things under the earth."

Hail, King of Righteousness and Peace, much do we need to meet You! Come, mount Your glorious chariot, ride forth conquering and to conquer drawn by Your three white horses, Meekness, Truth and Righteousness! Heaven adores You, earth obeys You, Hell trembles at Your Presence! Gates of brass must burst at Your touch and bars of iron snap at Your Word! O King Immortal, ride gloriously and let Your people behold You and rejoice in You. But we must see Christ, see Him, by close communion with Him. You cannot see Him by my description. Melchizedek met Abram and Jesus Christ must meet you. He must stop you all of a sudden, when you least expect it, and reveal Himself to you as He does not unto the world.

Jacob, before wrestling, was met by hosts of angels at Mahanaim–but what are these when compared with the Lord Himself? There is a high blessing in being met by angels–do not mistake me there–but oh, to be met by the Angel of the Covenant, the Michael the Archangel, to be met by Him! Ah, what comfort is here! And will He meet me? Will He meet you? Yes, we can answer, He will–for we have met with Him. "My eyes have seen the King in His beauty." Many of us can say that and our souls are exceedingly comforted and full of holy joy because we have beheld Him as Priest and King.

The next inquiry is what did he do for him? He brought him bread and wine, precisely setting forth what Jesus does, who brings us His flesh and His blood. Carnal people say in order to understand Christ's words, that when you eat bread and drink wine at the Lord's Table, there is His flesh in the bread, or that the bread is transubstantiated into flesh and the same with the wine. But the spiritual mind understands that these emblems awaken the spiritual powers and that the spiritual powers–not the lips and the stomach, but the spiritual powers–do really and spiritually feed upon the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ and so the Word is fulfilled–"Except you eat My flesh and drink My blood, there is no life in you."

I do not know that Christian people feed altogether on doctrine. I know that the Truth of God is food, but Believers get richer nourishment than even this affords. When I am very gloomy I like to take down some work upon the high doctrines–God's Sovereignty, election, perseverance–and I get comforted. But there are other times when I am brought very low and that kind of food will not suit me. I am obliged then to turn to my Lord Himself. There is, I believe, in times of conflict, no food which can be the stay of an immortal soul except the Master Himself–communion with Him–a putting of the fingers into the print of the nails and a thrusting of the hand into the side. This is the sovereign remedy for

unbelief and the best food for faith. His manifest Presence is our noblest nutriment.

When Christ reveals Himself, all grows calm and peaceful. But until we can get Him we still abide in darkness and we see no light. The worshiper who came up to the temple could not live upon the brazen laver, nor the golden snuffers, nor even upon the cherubic emblems–he must partake with the priests of the lamb offered in sacrifice! And so the true food of the child of God is Jesus Christ Himself–not so much ordinances and doctrines, which are only the utensils and the vestments–but Christ Himself! The very Christ, made flesh for us, received with joy into our soul and fed upon, until, like Abram, we go on our way rejoicing. That is what the royal priest did for the Patriarch.

Bear with me patiently while I remark what Melchizedek said to him. First he blessed him and then he blessed God and that is just what we need our Lord to do for us. We want our Lord Jesus Christ first to bless us. “Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of Heaven and earth.” We need a blessing upon our own persons and especially upon our own works. What are our works when we have done them all but futile vanity until God comes to strengthen us? Beloved, you and I may contend for Christ until we are dumb but not a soul will see the light or know the Truth of God by our witness of itself! We may go with tender hearts and seek to

bring sinners to the Cross of Christ, but we shall never bring a sinner unless God's own arm is revealed.

We shall come back like the Prophet, saying, "Who has believed our report?" And feeling that the arm of God has not been revealed unto men. But when, on the other hand, the Possessor of Heaven and earth has blessed us, then our earthly substance is blessed and our earthly words are blessed and then we get a heavenly blessing! Heaven's rest and peace–Heaven's Omnipotence rest upon us and in the glory of a Heaven-given strength we go forth confident of victory. We want a blessing from Christ. Ask for it now, Beloved! Ask for it now, you who are weary with last week's fighting, you who can scarcely endure any longer by reason of your trials and troubles! Say to Him now, "Melchizedek, bless me! O Jesus, bless me now!"

Possessor of Heaven and earth, forget not one of us, Your beloved ones, but give us a blessing! Beloved Brethren, Melchizedek did not stop there, but he fulfilled another part of his priestly office–he blessed God. Whenever we are singing here, when I am in right order, my soul takes wing and wants to fly to Heaven! When we all sing with power and force there is a sweetness and grandeur about the song which we do not often meet. Yet I am always conscious that we cannot praise God as He deserves to be and herein I bless the great Melchizedek that though we cannot bless God as He should be blessed, yet He can! Jesus Christ presents the praises of

His saints before God as well as their prayers. He is the Intercessor and while He has the vials full of odors sweet to present, He also presents the music of our harps. Both our offerings come up accepted in the Beloved.

Now what do you say, Brethren? Have you done anything this week that is of good repute? Has God given you any success? Dear Sister, have you won any souls for Christ? I know you have! Dear Brother, has God blessed you in any witness-bearing? Have you felt that God has been with you? Well now, come and lay your honors down at His feet, whatever they may be! Put them there and pray the great Melchizedek to take out of your heart every particle of self-glory and every atom of self-exaltation and ask Him to say for you in a higher sense than ever you can say it, "Blessed be the Most High God, possessor of Heaven and earth who has delivered my enemies into my hand." Thus you shall be glad that the great Melchizedek has met you!

I have talked thus, but truly one word from the lips of Christ will be worth ten thousand of mine! And if you ever have seen Him, you will think me a very dauber when I try to paint Him. If you get this day so much as ten minutes real fellowship with Jesus, you will wonder how it is, that I, if I know anything about Him, could talk in this cold way! Go your way, Brethren, and pray Melchizedek will meet you!

III. Lastly, and very briefly, indeed, since our time is gone–when a wrestling Believer is favored with a sight of the great Melchizedek–voluntarily and yet necessarily he makes a new dedication of himself to God. You see Abram does not appear to delay a moment but he gives to Melchizedek a tithe of all, by which he seemed to say, "I own the authority of my superior liege lord, to all that I am and all that I have." There is one of our hymns which says–

"Hail, Melchizedek Divine!
You, great High Priest, shall be mine.
All my powers before You fall
Take not tithe, but take them all."

And truly our holy faith deserves that we should give all to Christ!

I would that some Christians, however, practiced the rule of giving a tenth of their substance to the Lord's cause. The Lord's Church need never lack if you had a bag in which you stored up for Christ–when you gave anything, you would not feel it was giving of your own–your left hand would not know what your right hand did, for you would be taking out of the Lord's stock which you had already consecrated to the Lord's cause. Not less than one-tenth should be the Lord's portion, especially with those who have.

And more than this, I think, should be expected of those who have wealth. But there is no rule binding with iron force upon you

for we are not under Law in Christ's Church, but under Grace and Grace will prompt you to do more than Law might suggest. But certainly the Christian should reckon himself to be not his own and that he has nothing to retain for his own private account. I pray God if I have a drop of blood in my body which is not His, to let it bleed away! And if there is one hair in my head which is not consecrated to Him, I would have it plucked out–for it must be the devil's drop of blood and the devil's hair. It belongs to either one or the other–if not to God, then to Satan. No, we must, Brethren, have no division of ourselves–no living unto this world and unto God, too.

Mark Anthony yoked two lions together and drove them through the streets of Rome–they do strange things at Rome and there are many people who can yoke two lions together and drive towards Rome. But you will never be able to yoke the lion of the tribe of Judah and the lion of Hell together–they are at deadly antagonism and Christ will not have you for His servants if you seek to serve two masters. I know that any talk of mine here will be in vain, but if, Beloved, you should see Christ and have communion with Him, your consecration to Him will be a matter of course. I will suppose that this afternoon one of you should sit down in your arm chair and, as you are sitting there, you will be thinking, "How little I have been giving of late to the cause of Christ! How seldom I have opened my mouth for Him!" Perhaps you will think, "I have got on

in the world, too, but I really cannot afford it! My expenses are so great!"Suppose the Lord Jesus Christ should come into the room with those pierced hands and bleeding feet–suppose He were to remind you of what He has done for you–how He visited you in your low estate when your heart was breaking under a sense of sin? You would not tell Him you could not afford to give to His cause! Suppose our Lord Jesus Christ should look you in the face and say to you, "I have done all this for you. What will you do for Me?" What would be your answer? Why, you would say, "Take it all, my Master, take it all, all that I am and all that I have shall be forever Yours."

Or, if you felt niggardly–supposing He should say to you, "If you will never ask anything of Me, I will never take anything from you." Would you agree to that? No! Because you still will have immense demands to make upon His liberality cease not to give your whole spirit, soul and body as a whole burnt-offering unto God. As Abram did before Melchizedek so you do in the Presence of Christ. Admit that you are His and give yourself to Him. My dear Brethren, I pray God that this may stir you up to seek a high grade of piety and to live in daily communion with a living Savior and He will bless and keep you.

But there are some of you who are not like Abram. You need not hope, yet, to see Melchizedek. There are some of you strangers, far off. Ah, I may rather compare you to the men of Sodom! Christ has

done something for you as Abram did for Sodom. You know it was only for the sake of Lot that He brought them back, but He did bring them all back and for the sake of Lot gave a respite to them all–although a few years after they had grown so wicked that they were all destroyed. My Master has given a respite to free you all. While His great work was the salvation of His own chosen, yet He has spared you all in the land of the living. Take heed lest you do as did the men of Sodom, for then a hail more fiery, a destruction more terrible must come upon you, seeing that you turn not aside from your evil ways, nor seek His face.

Trust Christ and you are saved! Believe in Him and your sins are forgiven. But if you refuse, beware lest that come upon you which is written in the Prophets, “Behold, you despisers and wonder and perish!” The Master now send us away with His benediction. Amen.

Ge 15:1 • Abraham's Great Reward

SERMON 2814

Abraham's Great Reward

" Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward."

Genesis 15:1

You have probably heard a great many sermons on the first part of the text, "I am your shield," so, on this occasion, I am going to leave that portion in order to more fully consider the second part–"I am your exceeding great reward."

Notice, first, the circumstances under which these words were spoken to Abraham. It must have been in his memory that not very long before, he had parted from his nephew, Lot, and had given him his choice as to which way he would go with his flocks and his

herds. And Lot, regardless of the character of the people among whom he was going to dwell, chose the well-watered plain of Jericho or Jordan in which were the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. He thought only of temporal advantages and now he had lost everything in the battle of the four kings against five. Abraham had an eye to the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, so he had not lost anything. In fact, he was able to restore to Lot all that he had lost. And now the Lord appears to him and seems to say to him, "Your nephew Lot trusted in what he could see. He followed the leading of his own judgment and chose that which seemed to be for his own immediate advantage, and now he has lost all. But, fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward. You shall not lose. You have chosen the good part which shall not be taken from you. You have no share of the well-watered plain of Jordan to lose. You need not fret, for you shall never lose your portion." The Patriarch might also have said, on his own account, "The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I trust in Him."

You, Beloved, have probably seen others suffering the loss of all things and brought to deep despair as the result. But do not be alarmed at whatever happens to you. You have made God to be your refuge and you shall find a most secure abode in Him. You may have losses and afflictions–these are a part of your lot–but they shall not overwhelm you. You shall be no real losers in the

end, but you shall be kept by the power of God and shall be delivered out of every trial and affliction. He shall also be to you your shield and your exceeding great reward.

Again, Abraham had just at that time refused the gifts of the king of Sodom. They were his rightful spoil and he might very properly have taken them, yet he would not do so, lest, in later days the king of Sodom should say, “It was not Abraham’s God that enriched him. It is no use for him to talk about living by faith, for it was my gifts, or the spoilsof war that enriched him.” “No,” says Abraham, “you shall never be able to say that! Whatever I have shall be God’s gift to me, not the king of Sodom’s gift. I will be independent of men. I will be dependent only upon the living God.” The Lord admires this spirit, so He comes and says to His servant, “Fear not, Abram. Whatever you may have given up for My sake, for My Glory’s sake, for the sake of My honor, you shall not be a loser in any respect, for I will be your shield, and your exceeding great reward.”

Have you, dear Friend, made any sacrifices for Christ? Have you lately been called to imperil your own interests by pursuing a right course? Have you been steadfast even though you lost friendships? Have you been so firm in your adherence to principle that you have been judged to be obstinate? Well, if so, you shall be no loser through your faithfulness! As certainly as God is in Heaven, you shall prove, in some way or other, that in keeping His

commandments there is great reward. It is always a pity when any of the children of God begin to think that they can be enriched by the king of Sodom, or try to find their portion, in any measure, among the ungodly sons of men. God's command to His people is, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." And His promise to those who do is, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

We must also remember that at the time the Lord spoke thus to Abraham, the Patriarch was not the possessor of a single foot of the land which had been promised to him. The whole of it was to belong to his posterity and, in God's promise, Abraham held the title-deeds to the freehold. Those who were in possession were but leaseholders and their lease would soon run out, but, at that time, Abraham had not even a foot of ground that he could call his own. And when he needed a sepulcher, he had to buy the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron, in the presence of the children of Heth. So, in our text, the Lord seems to say to him, "Abraham, you have no possession in this land. You are a stranger and a foreigner in it, but 'fear not,' I am your portion and your heritage, your exceeding great reward.' Although others look upon you as a mere Bedouin wandering about with your flocks and herds, and pitching your tents here, today, and there, tomorrow, with no settled resting place, be not troubled because of that." It is the same with

us, Beloved, for the Lord has been the dwelling place of His people in all generations, even as He was the dwelling place of Abraham! And He would have Abraham know that it was so and feel that he was not penniless, or landless, for the Lord was his "exceeding great reward."

One other circumstance is worth remembering. Abraham had just been paying tithes to Melchizedek, so now was just the time for the Lord to give him a blessing. Have you ever heard a sermon from the text, "Prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open to you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it"? I have read discourses upon that passage, but the singularity of the sermons has consisted in the fact that they were not fairly preached from the text, because it runs thus, "Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts." It was their bringing ofthe tithes that was to be the test as to the time when the blessing should be given to them–and the proof of God's fidelity to His promise would be seen by the filling of their barns and houses by His bounty! Abraham had paid to Melchizedek, as the representative of the Most High, tithes of all–then came the blessing–"Fear not, Abram: I am your shield,and your exceeding great reward."

Solomon's word is still true, "There is that scatters, and yet increases; and there is that withholds more than is meet, but it tends

to poverty." The most impoverishing money in the world is God's money locked up in His own steward's possession, left to canker and to rust among the gifts of His Providence–not the man's own possession at all, but stolen from his Master, embezzled–that he might accumulate more and more, to die a little richer and so be unfaithful to his stewardship! O my Brothers and Sisters, this may seem to some of you a thing about which we ought not to speak, but we will hold our tongue about nothing that is a part of the duty of Christians and the will of the Lord! And since we do believe that many professors bring a curse upon themselves through neglect of this duty, we must speak of it. You will find that in faithfully serving the Lord in this matter, He will give you such a blessing upon your substance that you shall praise His name that He ever taught you the value of self-sacrifice and self-denial–and showed you how to consecrate your substance to Him!

These are the circumstances under which these words were spoken to Abraham. Now let us consider the text itself–"I am your exceeding great reward." And let us ask, first, What is this reward? What are the excellences of thisexceeding great reward? What then?

First, then, let us enquire, WHAT IS THIS REWARD? "I am your exceeding great reward."

It is not the land of Canaan. That was to be given to Abraham, but that was not his great reward. It is not a posterity, though he pined

for it. No, it is not anything that God will give him–it is God, Himself. I–I, Jehovah–the Hebrew is peculiarly emphatic in setting apart the word, "I, Jehovah, am your exceeding great reward." The Lord Himself is the portion of His people! When Canaan was divided, there was a lot for Judah, for Simeon, for Reuben and so on–but as for the Levites, the Lord was their portion–and we are like the Levites–as many of us as who have believed inthe Lord. The Lord is our portion and He is such a portion as excels everything else that we might have!

I do not think that any human mind can ever grasp the fullness of meaning of these four words, "I am your reward." God Himself the reward of His faithful people! This I feel sure of–that although I can enjoy the sweetness of this text for myself, my feeble lips can never tell even the hundredth part of the precious meaning of it! Therefore, my Brothers and Sisters, do not depend upon me, but appropriate the text to yourselves. Be not content for me to cook and carve for you,but come and cut from the roast for yourselves–and cut large slices, too! Let each man take to himself all that he needs out of this glorious text as he meditates upon it!

Think what a reward it is for us even to know God. Years ago we knew that there was a God. At least we heard so,but He was a perfect stranger to us. We never recognized Him. Possibly we asked His blessing upon our meals, but it was a mere formality. We did not see His hand in everything–in fact, we lived almost as if

there was no God. If there had really been no God, probably we would have been all the happier. But now we know Him! We know that He made the heavens and the earth, that He is the Preserver of men and we see His hand in every gift of Providence. As we walk about the earth, we are accustomed to say, “These are His glorious works. My Father made them all. Here is God’s pencil, painting each flower. Here is God riding on the wings of the wind and there is God walking on the waves of the sea! To us, God is everywhere.” It has made life so happy, at least, I speak for myself, to feel, “My God is everywhere.” Perhaps you remember that simple story of Mungo Park when he was lost in Africa, recovering his spirits by looking at a little piece of moss and admiring its beauty, and saying, “Here is God at work even here,” and feeling that, if God was there, He was not really lost, He was still safe enough, for His Father was close at hand! It is worthwhile living when we have come into a practical recognition of God, when we have made the acquaintance of that glorious Divine Being who fills all in all! If we never had any reward but this, this would be a great one.

But we have gone on from knowing God to loving Him, which is much more. A good man once said, “If God did notlove me, yet if He would but allow me to love Him forever, I think that I could not be unhappy.” Surely you must know that to love God is a most blessed emotion! To look up to Him in all His excellence and

goodness. To admire Him with all your heart. To realize that your lips cannot sufficiently extol Him, or your mind think highly enough of Him–this is a most profitable exercise! The very thought of God, to a man who truly loves Him, is ecstasy! If my eternity could be spent in a dungeon with my heart full of love to God, it could not be an unhappy experience to live so!

But, at the back of this, there comes a far greater thing. Brothers and Sisters, we know that God loves us. I neverdare to try to speak about this great Truth of God–it is a thing to think over rather than to talk of. I like to get away quietly in a corner and just try to roll this sweet morsel under my tongue, to suck on it till I draw the very essence out of it–God loves me–or, as the hymn puts it–

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I am so glad that Jesus loves me.“For God to think me practically, is still more. But forHim to love me–this is the greatest wonder of all! You know how you, being evil, love your own children, but yourHeavenly Father loves you far more! You husbands know how you love your wives, yet there is One who loves His Church far more, for He gave Himself for her! God loves you, my Brother. God loves you, my Sister, if, indeed, you have been brought to believe in Jesus. And to know this great Truth of God is to have an "exceeding great reward,” because, if God loves us, everything must be right!

I was going on to say what He would do for us, but it seems to be almost too selfish to go into those details, for, asHe loves us, what is there that He will not do for us? Why, He has already done more for us than He ever can do in the future! He has already given to us His greatest Gift, for He has given His Son to us and, in so doing, He has given us all things. Your Father loves you, dear child of God and, therefore, He will continue to feed you, and clothe you, and teach you, and support you, and preserve you, and educate you till He has made you meet to see His blessed face and then you shall no longer be here at school, but go Home to dwell in His blessed Presence forever and forever! Is not this an "exceeding great reward"–to know God, to love Him and to be loved by Him? What more can we desire than this?

Yet we have even more than this, for, loving God we come to realize that we have possession of Him, so that we cansay, "This God is our God forever and ever." We say of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." We have bowed before Him, as Thomas did, and cried, "My Lord and my God." Just think, for a minute, dear Friends, what the possession of God means. God is yours in everything that He is. His Omnipotence is pledged to strengthen you. His Omniscience is engaged to direct you. All His attributes are employed on your behalf. He is everywhere present and, therefore, He will show Himself everywhere strong for your defense! He is Immutable so He

changes not in His love to you. He is Eternal so His mercy endures forever. Even the sterner attributes of God smile upon the saint–His Justice, His Righteousness, His Glory are all on the side of every Believer! You say, “I am poor,” but how can you be poor with such a rich Father? You say, “I am heavy of heart because of my low estate.” What? With God as yours. With Father, Son and Spirit yours. With the everlasting God, the Creator of Heaven and earth as your Father and your Friend forever and forever–how can you be troubled by reason of the difficulty of your circumstances? Brother, Sister, chide your heart for its foolishness! End your sighing and begin to sing! When we have God as our possession, we have an “exceeding great reward!”

And the reward seems to grow all the greater in the course of years, Gods infinite mercy has transformed us, at leastin part, into His likeness. God is so fully ours that we enter into fellowship with Him and receive of His sacred influences till we are changed into His image, even by the Lord, the Spirit. As you read the story of Abraham, you can see many of the attributes of God reflected in the character of His noble servant. Now, child of God, you should mourn that you are so little like God, but you should also rejoice that you are already made somewhat like Him and that when He shall appear, in whom your life is hid, you shall be like He is, for you shall see Him as He is. Oh, it is worthwhile to have lived, is it not, notwithstanding all the cares of life, when this is to be the end

of it all? Though man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward, blessed be God for an existence that has for its end that we should be made partakers of the Divine likeness and should be lifted up to be the sons and daughters of the Most High and dwell with Him in perfection forever! I thank God for His great Truth of the immortality of the soul, even with all the dreadful risks of everlasting wrath that surround it! It is worth the risk to have the possibility of becoming like God and we who have believed in Jesus have gone beyond the possibility, for we have the earnest and the assurance, the pledge and the token of the good work commenced within us, which, when it is perfected, shall make us like God Himself!

O my Soul, bow yourself before the Lord in reverent and adoring gratitude! You were almost like the devil by nature and what are you even now? You are dust and Deity combined, for the Hoy Spirit dwells in you! That body of yours must crumble back to dust, but, by-and-by, it shall be refashioned in glory and in power, and then, creature as you are, you shall be near and like your God! Is not this an “exceeding great reward” to even now be in process of preparation for so wonderful a climax as that?

I must also mention that God is our “exceeding great reward” in another sense, namely, that He deigns to visit usand speak with us. We have been moved by Divine influences. I am, of course, addressing myself only to those who have been born from above

and are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Upon you, Beloved, God has already bestowed a great reward, for He has raised you from your death of sin and His Spirit abides in you, fashioning and forming you unto perfection. And the Lord has, I trust, often spoken with you. If not often, whose fault has it been? Some of us can testify that He has drawn very near to our spirits at times. Do you not remember some happy seasons when you felt that you could not have borne any more delight? I mean, when you were so happy that to have been happier might have made you run the risk of death from excess of joy! Oh, the indescribable bliss, the heavenly joys of a soul when it feels the love of Christ shed abroad in the heart by the Hoy Spirit who is given unto it!

II. The time will not allow me to say more on that point, so now I come to enquire, in the second place, WHAT ARE THE EXCELLENCES OF THE GREAT REWARD WHICH IS PROMISED IN THE TEXT?

Notice, first, that it is an infinite reward–"I am your reward." Anything earthly that God pleases to give to us, wecan take away, carry it off and house it somewhere. But when God says, "I am your reward," we pause and look with mingled wonder, love and praise! This reward is incomprehensible–who can carry it away? Who can even measure it? Who can fathom the depths of this ocean, or soar to this vast height? God gives to other men health, wealth, fame, pleasure. But to you, Beloved, He gives Himself!

Their gifts are no more comparable to yours than the darkness is to the sun! In giving you Himself, He has given you all that He is! Truly, that is an infinite portion.

Then, next, this is a spiritual reward. There are some people who will not value it because of this very excellence. Andthis may be a test between the regenerate and the unregenerate. The ungodly say, "If God will but give us our barns full of wheat and our winepress bursting with new wine. If He will only fill our purses with gold and our houses with all manner of earthly delights, that will be enough for us." But you, Believer, are of another mind, for you have seen through the emptiness and vanity of all material things. You say, "What is the mere pleasure of eating and drinking but that with which a beast is my associate? What if I have honor among my fellow mortals? What is it but so much breath from other men's nostrils, so much clapping of the hands of fools? That is all it really is." What is there beneath the sun, that, to a man who is born of God, is worth his stooping down to pick it up? But when he gets his God, the new-born spirit within him, which hungers with an infinite hunger for the highest good, he says, "Here I have all that I need! Father, Son and Spirit–blessed Trinity, You are mine! My awakened spirit feels that this is a sea in which I can swim forever. This is the element in which I can truly live." To possess God is a great spiritual blessing, so the declaration of the text is true–"I am your exceeding great reward."

Notice, next, that this is an eternal reward, for he who has God as his own shall never lose Him since God changesnot. And he shall never exhaust Him, for who would even think that he can drain dry the infinite all-sufficiency of Jehovah? If God is yours, you have all for today, tomorrow, for time, for eternity, forever! All emergencies and circumstance of life–all for the tremendous terrors of the Day of Judgment, all for the ages of ages that shall never end! What more can you need?

To have God is, also, most ennobling. I do not know that there is anything in a great deal of wealth to make a mannoble. Many men seem to get more greedy, the more money they have. Their soul cleaves to their dust. But he who gets God as his own, oh, what a privileged man is he! Talk of princes–here is a prince, indeed! You may put as many emperors and great ones of the earth as you please in a barrel, but, if they are not saved by the Grace of God, they are not worthy, in the sight of God, of being compared with the poorest, weakest, most despised of all His people, to whom He is an "exceeding great reward!" O you great ones of the earth, you might well be content to become beggars if you might but have God to be your everlasting portion!

And what a soul-satisfying portion and reward this is! If you have God as yours, my Soul, sit down and see if you canthink of anything else–you cannot do it! Try and let your desires ramble over other fields. Untie them and give them liberty. But what can

they ask for, seek for, wish for beyond God Himself? There are, alas, some Christians who do not seem to realize the truth of this and they get dissatisfied with God. You have been serving the Master, my Brother or Sister, for some months. Perhaps it is in the Sunday school that you have been working, but nobody has taken much notice of you. The superintendent has not praised you, so you are discouraged. But remember that when you serve God, He isyour reward!

"Oh, but, Sir! I have been trying to do good in many ways. I have labored hard, but people only misrepresent me." Did you look for your reward in that way? If you did, I am glad that you are disappointed, because God says, "I am your reward." To know that you love God and that He loves you–that He is yours, and you are His–that is reward enough for you. "Oh, but," says a minister, "you do not really know how badly I have been treated. I have had many years of service in my congregation, but they are most ungrateful and do not appreciate me. They even want to get rid of me!" But, my Brother, God does not want to get rid of you. And He will appreciate you, for He loves you with an infinitelove. Why did you look to men and women for your reward? A man may have other rewards if he is content with God as his reward, but he who has any sinister or even secondary aim in what he does in the cause of God, spoils it all. This is the fly in the precious ointment! We must get rid of everything of this sort and be just as satisfied to serve God in

obloquy and reproach as we are to serve Him amid the acclamations of the multitude!

"It is not easy to do that," says one. No, Beloved, nothing is easy that is good, except to God–and you must go to Him to enable you to act so. But never shun a duty because you think it is difficult. Sit down with your Lord, alone, and He will speak to you and comfort you, and strengthen you. Remember how Elkanah comforted his wife, Hannah, when she sorrowed because she had no children? "Am not I better to you than ten sons?" And as he drew her close to him and she felt the warm glow of his loving heart, she realized that it was even so, and that gave her rest. And the Lord seems to draw each weary, sad, disappointed laboring one to Him and say, "Am I not better to you than all the praises of men? Am I not better to you than wealth? Am I not better to you than the health that you have lost? Am I not better to you than all the world?" And what is your answer? Surely it is this, "Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You." O God, bring us to that blessed position and keep us there! Then shall we have drunk in the meaning of our text, "I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward."

III. My third question is, WHAT THEN? As God is our exceeding great reward, what then?

First, it is quite clear that the rewards which are given to Believers are of Grace and not of debt. Do you not see thatin the

text? Look at it again and you will perceive it at once. If God is the reward of His people, it is not possible that any being could ever deserve to have God as his reward. It is very possible that a man should deserve the esteem of his fellow men and I think that most people deserve what they really earn. It would be well if some could have more than they receive–wages are often less than they should be. We may deserve more money than we get, but there is nobody who ever deserved God! To deserve Heaven has never been possible yet, but even if it had been, that would not be so much as deserving God! This is too big a portion to ever come to us on the ground of law, merit and good works, so, when the Lord says, "I am your reward," it must be all of Grace–and there is no possibility of earning this reward. When the men went into the vineyard and agreed with the householder for a penny a day, they earned it. But when the reward is God, Himself, there is nobody who has ever earned that, or who can ever do so. So, my Soul, sing of Free and Sovereign Grace! Letyour life-song be–

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Free Grace and dying love,"because the portion you have received is such as could have come to you on no other terms than those of free, rich, almighty, covenant, everlasting Grace! And therefore let God be glorified forever and ever.

I want to call your attention, next, to the fact that according to our text, we hold God on a very sure tenure becausewhat a man holds

as a reward, he knows to be his own. “Why,” he says, “I won this and I may well hold it fast.” Now, Brothers and Sisters, you and I have never deserved God. I have told you that is impossible, but He is as surely ours as if we

had earned Him, for He is our reward! A man, I say again, feels the utmost assurance that anything that comes to him as a reward is really his. Let us feel the same assurance and brave confidence concerning God and even more than if we stood upon the footing of merits. “I am your reward,” says the Lord. Then, “let no man beguile you of your reward.” Hold it fast! Let not the devil, himself, take it from you, or rob you of your joy in it! It is yours so surely and so safely that you may at all times rejoice in it as being yours upon the most certain tenure!

Another practical thought may come in here. If God is our reward, let us take care that we really enjoy Him. Let us exult in Him and let us not be pining after any other joy. You have to go and live in a lonely place where you will have few encouragements–but you will still have your God–so how can you feel lonely? You are coming down in earthly circumstances. Your income is decreasing. But your God is not any less than He was, so you are not really a loser. One dear Friend after another is being taken away from you–there is a great probability that the dearest one you have will soon go to the grave. Yet the Lord lives, so blessed be your Rock! Rejoice in Him! Possibly you are soon going to the grave yourself.

The years are taking their toll upon you and increasing weakness proves that, before long, you must put off this tabernacle. Well, even if it is so, He who is your All-in-All will not die! This world is not your rest or your portion! You are not, therefore, losing your portion, you are going Home to it, for the Lord, Himself, is “your shield, and your exceeding great reward.”

Ge 15:1; Ex 33:14 • Two Choice Assurances

SERMON 3330

T*wo Choice Assurances*

"Fear not, Abram: I am your shield and your exceedingly great reward."

Genesis 15:1

IN the splendid Psalm that sets forth the Divine Glory of the matchless Word of God as compared even with the greatest wonders of God's visible Creation–that is in the 19 th verse, "Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." This is applied to "the judgments of the Lord" which are "true and righteous altogether." Of course, this expression sets forth David's esteem of the Law of God as he knew it–a very small volume compared with our complete Bible–and yet we may surely apply it to the whole of

the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments! The Hebrew original has it, “Sweeter than the dropping of honeycombs.” Whereupon gracious Thomas Brookes, the Puritan Divine, observes, “it is sweeter than those drops which fall naturally and instantly from the comb without any force or act, and which are counted as being the purest, choicest and richest honey.” How true is this! There are some texts of Scripture that may yield their treasures of instruction, comfort, or direction after deep study and holy meditation–but there are others which are marvelously free in the giving forth of their sweetness, calling for little else than a heart that loves and longs to hear God speak!

As little children have their own confections that need no vigorous chewing, but will melt in the mouth, so some passages of Scriptures are prepared as choice morsels for the Lord’s children–they have only to receive them by transparent faith and unaffected love–and their enjoyment is great.

I know that some of the words of the Lord are as nuts that need breaking open to secure their nourishment, or as grapes that must be trod in the winepress, for their richest meaning lies not upon the surface and plain to all. But these others of which we speak–as the droppings of the honeycomb–are simple sweetnesses, prepared pleasures. Plain, unmistakable, choice delicacies for God’s loved ones!

To enjoy these, one needs not to be a deep theologian, a learned grammarian, or even much less, a profound philosopher or baffling mystic! The honey of the meaning flows easily and sweetly out of the comb of the words as liquid love, pure joy, choice consolation and perfect Truths of God! The student does not require to pore over his books, or the preacher to search his library, or the hearer to gather up all his knowledge to receive and enjoy these. The dainty comfort offers itself at once to the soul's receiving and, without effort, the sweetness and savor pervade the whole inner being.

So as the Holy Spirit shall open up the word to me, I hope to be able to give you, Beloved, some honey out of the Rock by dwelling on one or two choice, plain texts that speak their sweetness direct to the heart. Not so much for intellectual gratifying–though that is included–as for spiritual satisfying and stimulating. Some preachers seem to make their main business to be the leading of people among the thorns, to be torn with perplexities, or into the fog to tantalize with uncertainties. Be it ours on this occasion to run as did Ahimahaz by way of the plain–along the level road of gracious and comforting teaching! We do well, sometimes, to let the heart have undivided play and gain, thereby, the solace and joy that we so much need!

The droppings of the honeycomb are not so much for labor and toil as for renewal and delight–that the mere student and man of affairs may for a while come and sit and indulge in holy pleasures!

Let this suffice for introduction to our first word of sacred assurance as given to Abram.

“Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceedingly great reward.”

“Fear not, Abram.” No more necessary or practical word could be spoken to the great Father of the Faithful than this. Fear, alas, is a malaria which haunts all the marshlands of earth! It can beset the king on his throne, the peasant in his cottage, the statesman in his lofty office and the poor old mother who dreads the pauper’s lot and fare. It is the shadow that follows us when the sun is shining brightly before–how to escape it is the problem that perplexes thousands of the saints of God. We might be sure that it was so, when so mighty a Believer as Abram was in great peril of it! Does he need a, “fear not,” from Jehovah’s lips? Then we may be sure that we shall require it, too. I am afraid that wherever there is faith there will also be a measure of fear, though the less of it, the better. How tenderly the Lord quiets the fears of His children and lulls their forebodings to rest! “Fear not, Abram.” As much as if He had said “You are all alone, but fear not, for I am with you. You are in much labor, needing great strength, but fear not, I will help you. You have no portion, but are a stranger and sojourner in this land, but fear not, for I am your God. Do not fear concerning the past, nor the present, nor the future. Fear neither the fury of foes, nor the worse trial–the failure of friends. Be brave, calm, trustful, hopeful,

joyful. Fear not, Abram." "You have just been fighting the kings– you desired to be a man of peace and were not, indeed, accustomed to the deadly strife. But I have given the marauders and plunderers like driven stubble to your bow–and you have brought back Lot and all his train of servants that were taken prisoners. You need not fear even for your relatives! I will bless and keep them for your sake. Besides, since you have borne yourself in a right royal fashion and not touched a thread or a shoe lace of the king of Sodom's goods, do not fear to enjoy your success, for you shall be safe from all attacks and shall command the respect of the great ones around you." This blessed "fear not" was a quietus to every form of alarm and misgiving which might come near and threaten this man of God!

Is not this our Lord's own message to His children everywhere today? He has scattered His, "fear nots," all over His blessed Word as some riverbanks are all spread with sweet forget-me-nots! And these "fear nots," cover every emergency of our life and answer to them with the assurance that His love will never forget or fail us! And if we will but remember this, we shall have no cause whatever to fear.

But the Lord appears to teach Abram that after his conflict and signal victory he might begin to sink. Such is often the case with the bravest men. The natural reaction, unless special Divine Grace is given, is very great. It was so with Elijah, the Prophet of Fire.

Men have little time or space to dread while the fierce conflict is raging–their spirit of dash and enterprise is awakened and equal to the struggle and the danger! But when all is over and strained body and brain and nerves begin to assert themselves, then they greatly need the Lord's reviving and fortifying, "fear not."

Beloved, have you never felt yourself strangely supported under the direst afflictions, so that they seemed not afflictions at all? And yet when pressure has been removed you have been ready to faint like Samson after he had slain the Philistines! Fear is a strange contradiction, a grim inconsistency, for it is apt to be greatest when the reason for it is least and smallest.

We are often quiet in a storm and distracted in a calm. We are mysteries to ourselves and riddles to our neighbors. Our constitutions and dispositions sometimes appear to be made up of odds and ends and gatherings from all manner of beasts, and birds, and fishes– and none can understand us but the Lord who made us! But, blessed be His name, He knows us altogether and therefore He can and does bring forth at the right moment the exact consolation and the precise heartening that we need, saying, "Fear not," in the instant wherein we are most likely to fear!

"Fear not, Abram." Were there not mainly two things about which the Patriarch might have feared? First, about his own safety. This was met by the assurance, "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield." When he had no other guard, Abram was garrisoned in God. He

was like a sheep in the midst of wolves, a lone stranger surrounded by hostile nations! But a strange Divine spell had fallen upon the Canaanites, for the Lord had made them hear Him saying, “Touch not My anointed and do My Prophet no harm.” The protected of the Lord needed not to wear armor, nor bear a sword, nor have any human panoply, for Jehovah had said, “I am your shield.” Abram possessed no fortress, commanded no army but his few servants. He had not even a permanent house in which to dwell. His tents were frail and undefended and yet so guarded by Heaven, that no one ever broke into them or dared molest or threaten those who dwelt within! No assassin waylaid him, no marauder attacked him–he dwelt at ease, for was he not under the broad shield of the Almighty? He was as safe as if he had been enclosed within walls that reached to the skies! The armor of God covered him from head to foot!

So, dear Friends, when we seem to have nothing, certainly nothing visible, to protect us, what a blessing it is to know that we are nevertheless completely guarded by the Omnipotent though invisible God!

The visible is necessarily the limited and finite, but the invisible God is Infinite and there is no searching of His understanding, or resistance to His power. You are infinitely safe if you really trust the living God–your beginning and ending, your waking and sleeping, your resting and journeying, your work and suffering,

your honor or your reproach, your poverty or wealth, your success or failure, your life or death–your all forever and ever is most secure when the Lord is your Keeper and your Shield upon your right hand. Be it ours in truest wisdom and sincerest trust to give up our hearts to the repose of simple faith in Him!

Come, sing with me that verse of the beloved singer Toplady–

"Inquirer and Hearer of prayer,
You Shepherd and Guardian of Thine,
My all to Your Covenant care,
I sleeping and waking resign!
If You are my shield and my sun,
The night is no darkness to me–
And fast as the moments roll on,
They bring me but nearer to Thee!"

We are invulnerable and invincible if God is with us! We may be in the very midst of cruel adversaries, but no weapon that is formed against us can prosper if God is our Shield. Our Lord did not say to Abram, and does not say to us, "I will shield you," but that I, that am the Almighty, I am your Shield: it is not alone My power, My wisdom, My love which will protect you, but I, Myself, will be your Shield!

Then Abram may have thought, "I shall be protected, but shall I not spend my life in vain?" He might have fearedfor his success. He led the life of a gypsy, roaming through a land in which he

owned no foot of ground. Therefore the Lord added, “I am your Reward.” Do you see? He does not say, “I will reward you,” but “I am your Reward.” If we whowork for Christ see souls saved, how we rejoice, for they are a kind of reward to us–but nevertheless we will not rejoice so much but rather rejoice that our names are written in Heaven! I have in these words quoted an old text, first spoken to chosen men who had healed the sick and cast out devils in Christ’s name. And if many receive our word it is a joy to us, but still we may be disappointed even in professed conversions and, at best, our success will not equal our desires. The only reward that a Christian can fully rejoice in–and without any reservation–is this assurance of his Master and Lord, “I am your Reward.” Did not the father in the parable say to the elder son, when he growled and grumbled at the reception given to his brother, “Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours”? That was reward enough, was it not? It is wealth enough to a Believer to possess his God, honor enough to please his God, happiness enough to enjoy his God. My heart’s best treasure lies here–“This God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.”

“Oh, but,” you say, “people have been so ungrateful to me.” True, but God is not unfaithful to forget your work of faith and labor of love. “Ah, Sir, but I am dreadfully poor.” Yet you have God All-Sufficient, and all things are yours! “Alas! I am so ill.” But Jehovah-Rophi is the Lord that heals you! “Alas! I have no friends

left.” Yet this best of friends changes not and dies not. Is He not better to you than a host of other friends?

How great is your God? Does He not fill all things? Then what more can you seek? Would you have two persons occupying the same place? If God fills all, what room is there left for another? Is not God’s Grace sufficient for you? Do you bemoan a cup of water that has been spilled at your feet? A well is near! Did I hear you cry, “I have not a drop in my bucket?” A river flows hard by–the river of God which is full of water! Oh, mournful Soul, why are you disquieted? What ails you that you should fret your life into rags?

Very fitly does the Lord say to Abram, “I am your exceedingly great reward.” He is infinitely more as a reward thanwe could ever have desired, expected, or deserved! There is no measuring such a reward as God Himself. If we were to pine away into poverty or sickness, it would still be joy enough to know that God gives Himself to be our portion. The tried people of God will always confess that in their sharpest time of sorrow, their joys have reached their floodtide when they knew and felt that the Lord is their Covenant God, their Father, their All! Our cup runs over when faith receives Jehovah, Himself, as the crown of the race, the wages of the service! What more can even God bestow, than Himself?

Now you see what I meant at the beginning by droppings from the honeycomb. I have not strained after novel thoughts or choice

words, but have persuaded you to taste the natural sweetness of this fine Scripture promise. Receive it as God gives it and go your way–and let the flavor of it fill your souls all the week! Fear not, Mary! Fear not, William! Fear not, Sarah! Fear not, John! The Lord says to you, even as to Abram, "I am your shield and exceedingly great reward." No Scripture is of private interpretation–you may take out the name of Abram and put your own name into the promise if you are of Abram's spiritual seed–and do not stagger at the promise by reason of unbelief. "If children, then heirs" applies to all the spiritual family and to the pledging of all the promises to them!

The ground whereon you lie, the Lord your God has given you. If you can rest on this Word of God, it is truly yours to rest upon. The Lord is your Defender and Rewarder and by the double title He designs to shut out all fear and so make your rest and safety to be doubly sure! Therefore, cease you from all anxiety! Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him! This day He bids you dwell at ease and delight yourself in Him!

But we turn from Abram to Moses and we find this sweetly solacing assurance given also to him in time of special need and strain.

"And He said, 'My Presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.'"

It was not a pleasure trip that Moses was taking–it was a journey through the wilderness on most important business–and with a

great pressure of burden on his heart. He took his case to his God and earnestly appealed to Him, “See, You say unto me, Bring up this people, and You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, I know you by name, and you have also found Grace in My sight. Now, therefore, I pray You, if I have found Grace in your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You, that I may find Grace in Your sight: and consider that this nation is Your people.”

It is very beautiful to notice the argument that Moses uses. He says, “Lord, You have set me to take care of this people. How can I do it? But they are Your people.” Therefore he appeals to Jehovah, Himself, for assistance. “You have not let me know whom You will send with me” is his complaint, but he seems to always have before him the fact that He, whose people they were, who had put him into commission to guide them, and to bear all their provocations, must intend to give him some very superior help! The answer to that is, “My Presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.” What more could Moses need, and what more can we need? We are so foolish that we look about for strength away from God–but there is none except in Him! For all preachers and evangelists, how precious is this promise! They need Divine help in journeying from place to place–and that help lies in the constant fellowship of heart with their Lord–the continual Presence of God consciously enjoyed! They have a great burden of souls lying upon them–their

only strength to bear it bravely and triumphantly is that each hears for himself the promise from God's own lips, "My Presence shall go with you." It may not appear to some that the quarter of an hour in the morning spent in looking into the face of God with ecstatic joy can fill us with strength, but we know from blessed experience that there is no strength like it! If the Eternal overshadows us, then Omnipotence comes streaming into us! Jehovah in Infinite, condescending liberality gives forth His might to us!

Notice, Beloved, that Moses was not informed that God would send Hobab, his father-in-law, to go with him. Nor that Joshua, his successor, should accompany him. Nothing either was said about the 70 elders who were, by-and-by, to share the burden of responsibility with him. Moses was, indeed, to have their presence and help, but his true power was to lie in this–"My Presence shall go with you." The journey upon which he was to start was one of great importance foreseen by God to be a journey of great trial and great provocation–a journey that was to last for 40 years–but this is all the provision that he needs and God, Himself, could give him no more.

And then He adds, " And I will give you rest." Little as we sometimes imagine it, yet it is still true, that the most important possession of any Christian worker is rest–deep rest of soul in God–"A heart at leisure from itself." "I do not expect any rest," says one, "while I am here." Do you not? Then you will not do

much mighty and effective work for the Lord! Those who work most must learn the holy art of resting in the Lord. Indeed, it cannot be done well at all unless they have plenty of rest. You will notice how people that get greatly excited often talk sad nonsense–and people who are very fretful or fearful do not speak or act as they should. If we are to move others, we must have both feet firmly fixed–there is nothing like having a good grip of the ground if you are to wrestle with and throw your antagonist! My restfulness in God enables me to wrestle and conquer all sorts of difficulty and hard toil that is to be overcome.

"Do you think Moses had this rest?" someone will ask. Yes, I am sure he had because of the meekness of his spirit. You remember how the Lord Jesus said, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest to your souls." It is true that meekness of heart produces rest. And yet it is a still deeper Truth of God that rest produces meekness of heart! You can very well afford to be quiet with your fellows when you, yourself, are perfectly restful in the living God. I remember a man being run over in the street one day. Somebody rushed off, post haste, for the nearest doctor. And when the medical man heard of the accident, he went calmly into his surgery, turned over his case of instruments, selected those he thought he might need and then walked quietly to the spot where the injured man lay. The messenger tried to hurry him, but it was of no use. "Be quick,

Doctor," he cried, "the man's leg is broken, every moment is precious." Now the surgeon knew that he was doing the very best thing that he could do, and he was far wiser than he would have been if he had rushed off in wild haste, perhaps forgetting the very instrument he most needed, and arriving out of breath and quite unfit for the delicate duty required of him! The doctor's composure was not the result of coldness of heart, but of the resolve to do the best possible thing in the best possible fashion.

If you are conscious of the Lord's Presence, you will do the best thing possible by being very calm, deliberate and quiet in His service. "He that believes," in that sense, "shall not make haste," but he shall go about the business in a restful spirit.

Mark, too, the kind of rest that is here mentioned. "I will give you rest." All the rest that God gives we may safely take! No man ever rested too long on the bosom of Jesus. I believe many Christian workers would be better if they enjoyed more. I was speaking to a large gathering of preachers the other day upon this very matter, my subject being the Savior asleep during the storm on the Sea of Galilee. He knew there was a storm coming on, but He felt so happy and restful in His Father's love and care that He went into the back part of the boat–the best place for sleep–and taking the steersman's cushion for a pillow, lay down and went to sleep! It was the very best thing He could do. He had been busy all day, teaching and feeding the multitudes, and He felt that it was His

duty to go to sleep that He might be ready and fit for the next day's toil. When you get very weary and perhaps worried as well, the best thing you can do is to go tosleep. Go to bed, Brother, and go to sleep!

It is astonishing what a difference a night's rest makes with our troubles. I would say this literally to fidgeting, worrying people like myself, "Go to bed, Brother, go to bed!" But I would also say it spiritually to all sorts of people! When you are feeling weak and disturbed, and you do not know what to do for the best, "Go into the Presence of Lord and there get rest." "My Presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest." I will give you a little bit of worldly wisdom, which is also of Divine inspiring. Whenever you do not know what to do, do not do it! But some people, when they do not know what to do, go and do it, directly, and get themselves into all sorts of trouble. Many of us, like Moses, need to be taught to rest. Moses has to bear two millions of people on his heart–he needs rest. He has to put up with them for 40 years–he needs rest. Never had another man such a family as that! Never was another so likely to be fluttered and worried! And he was a meek-spirited man, too, who could not make a dash as others might have done. This is his strength–that he dwells in the Divine Presence and is, therefore, restful, calm and strong! It is only now and then that he let the human meekness be for a moment clouded. Thus was he enabled to march along, like a king in Jeshurun, as he was–and his soul dwelt

in the eternity of God, ever singing amidst ten thousand graves, for he had 40 of his people dying every day!

Shall not we who love the Savior hear this same gracious promise sounding clear and sweet in our souls and trusting in the abiding Presence of God find that He gives the unparalleled rest, the rest that endures? And if, on the other hand, we are strangers to that brave, strong peace, shall we not listen as He calls, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest”? And answering to it, enter into that rest that always follows true believing! The Lord grant it may be so, with each one, for His name’s sake!

Ge 15:6 • Justification by Faith — Illustrated by Abram's Righteousness

SERMON 0844

Justification By Faith—Illustrated By Abram's Righteousness

"And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness."

Genesis 15:6

You will remember that last Lord's-day morning we spoke upon the calling of Abram, and the faith by which he was enabled to enter upon that separated life at the bidding of the Most High. We shall today pass from the consideration of his calling to that of his justification, that being most remarkably next in order in his history, as it is in point of theology in the New Testament–for, "whom He called, them He also justified."

Referring to the chapter before us for a preface to our subject, note that after Abram's calling his faith proved to be of the most practical kind. Being called to separate himself from his kindred and from his country, he did not, therefore, become a recluse, a man of ascetic habits, or a sentimentalist unfit for the battles of ordinary life. No, but in the noblest style of true manliness he showed himself able to endure the household trouble and the public trial which awaited him.

Lot's herdsmen quarreled with the servants of Abram, and Abram, with great disinterestedness, gave his younger and far inferior relative the choice of pasturage. He gave up the well-watered plain of Sodom, which was the best of the land. A little while after, the grand old man who trusted in his God showed that he could play the soldier, and fight right gloriously against terrible odds. He gathered together his own household servants and accepted the help of his neighbors, and pursued the conquering hosts of the allied kings, and smote them with as heavy a hand as if from his youth up he had been a military man.

Brothers and Sisters, this everyday life faith is the faith of God's elect! There are persons who imagine saving faith to be a barren conviction of the truth of certain abstract propositions, leading only to a quiet contemplation upon certain delightful topics, or separating ourselves from all sympathy with our fellow creatures– but it is not so! Faith, restricted merely to religious exercise, is not

Christian faith–it must show itself in everything. A merely religious faith may be the choice of men whose heads are softer than their hearts or more fit for cloisters than markets. But the manly faith which God would have us cultivate is a grand practical principle adapted for every day in the week–helping us to rule our household in the fear of God and to enter upon life's rough conflicts in the warehouse, the farm, or the exchange.

I mention this at the commencement of this discourse because as this is the faith which came of Abram's calling, so also does it shine in his justification, and is, indeed, that which God counted unto him for righteousness. Yet the first verse shows us that even such a Believer as Abram needed comfort. The Lord said to him, "Fear not." Why did Abram fear? Partly because of the reaction which is always caused by excitement when it is over. He had fought boldly and conquered gloriously, and now he fears.

Cowards tremble before the fight, and brave men after the victory. Elijah slew the priests of Baal without fear, but after all was over his spirit sank and he fled from the face of Jezebel. Abram's fear also originated in an overwhelming awe in the Presence of God. The word of Jehovah came to him with power and he felt that same prostration of spirit which made the beloved John fall at the feet of his Lord in the Isle of Patmos, and made Daniel feel, on the banks of the Hiddekel, that there was no strength in him. "Fear not," said the Lord to the Patriarch. His spirit was too deeply bowed. God

would uplift His beloved servant into the power of exercising sacred familiarity.

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, this is a blessed fear–let us cultivate it–for until it shall be cast out by perfect love, which is better still, we may be content to let this good thing rule our hearts. Should not a man, conscious of great infirmities, sink low in his own esteem in proportion as he is honored with communion with the glorious Lord? When he was comforted, Abram received an open declaration of his justification. I take it, beloved Friends, that our text does not intend to teach us that Abram was not justified before this time. Faith always justifies whenever it exists, and as soon as it

The moment a man truly trusts his God he is justified. Yet many are justified who do not know their happy condition–many to whom, as yet, the blessing of justification has not been opened up in its excellency and abundance of privilege. There may be some of you here today who have been called by Divine Grace from darkness into marvelous light. You have been led to look to Jesus and you believe you have received pardon of your sin, and yet, for lack of knowledge, you know little of the sweet meaning of such words as these, “Accepted in the Beloved.” “Perfect in Christ Jesus.” “Complete in Him.” You are doubtless justified, though you scarcely understand what justification means. And you are accepted, though you have not realized your acceptance. And you are complete in Jesus Christ, though you have, today, a far deeper

sense of your personal incompleteness than of the all-sufficiency of Jesus.

A man may be entitled to property though he cannot read the title deeds or has not, as yet, heard of their existence. The law recognizes right and fact, not our apprehension. But there will come a time, Beloved, when you who are called will clearly realize your justification and will rejoice in it! It shall be intelligently understood by you and shall become a matter of transporting delight–lifting you to a higher platform of experience and enabling you to walk with a firmer step, sing with a merrier voice–and triumph with an enlarged heart!

I intend now, as God may help me, first to note the means of Abram's justification. Then, secondly, the Object of the faith which justified him. And then, thirdly, the attendants of his justification.

First, Brethren, HOW WAS ABRAM JUSTIFIED? We see in the text the great Truth of God which Paul so clearly brings out in the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, that Abram was not justified by his works. Many had been the good works of Abram. It was a good work to leave his country and his father's house at God's bidding. It was a good work to separate from Lot in so noble a spirit. It was a good work to follow after the robber-kings with undaunted courage. It was a grand work to refuse to take the spoils of Sodom and to lift up his hand to God that he would not take a thread even to a shoe lace. It was a holy work to give to

Melchisedec tithes of all that he possessed, and to worship the Most High God.

Yet none of these are mentioned in the text, nor is there a hint given of any other sacred duties as the ground or cause, or part cause, of his justification before God. No, it is said, "He believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness." Surely, Brothers and Sisters, if Abram, after years of holy living, is not justified by his works, but is accepted before God on account of his faith, much more must this be the case with the ungodly sinner who, having lived in unrighteousness, yet believes on Jesus and is saved! If there is salvation for the dying thief, and others like he, it cannot be of debt, but of Grace, seeing they have no good works! If Abram, when full of good works, is not justified by them, but by his faith, how much more we, being full of imperfections, must come unto the Throne of the heavenly Grace and ask that we may be justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus, and saved by the free mercy of God!

Further, this justification came to Abram not by obedience to the ceremonial law any more than by conformity to the moral law. As the Apostle has so plainly pointed out to us, Abram was justified before he was circumcised. The initiatory step into the outward and visible Covenant, so far as it was ceremonial, had not yet been taken, and yet the man was perfectly justified! All that follows after cannot contribute to a thing which is already perfect. Abram, being

already justified, cannot owe that justification to his subsequent circumcision–this is clear enough. And so, Beloved, at this moment, if you and I are to be justified, these two things are certain–it cannot be by the works of the moral law and it cannot be by obedience to any ceremonial law, be it what it may–whether the sacred ritual given to Aaron, or the superstitious ritual which claims to have been ordained by gradual tradition in the Christian Church.

If we are, indeed, the children of faithful Abraham, and are to be justified in Abraham's way, it cannot be by submission to rites or ceremonies of any kind! Hearken to this carefully, you who would be justified before God–Baptism is, in itself, an excellent ordinance but it cannot justify nor help to justify us! Confirmation is a mere figment of men, and could not, even if commanded by God, assist in justification! And the Lord's Supper, albeit that it is a Divine institution, cannot in any respect whatever minister to your acceptance or to your righteousness before God!

Abram had no ceremonies in which to rest. He was righteous through his faith, and righteous only through his faith. And so must you and I be if we are ever to stand as righteous before God at all. Faith, in Abram's case, was the only and unsupported cause of his being accounted righteous! Note, although in other cases Abram's faith produced works, and although in every case where faith is genuine it produces good works, yet the particular instance of faith recorded in this chapter was unattended by any works.

God brought him forth under the star-lit heavens and bade him look up. “So shall your seed be,” said the sacred voice. Abram did what? Believed the promise–that was all. It was before he had offered sacrifice. Before he had said a holy word or performed a single action of any kind that the words immediately and instantly went forth, “He believed in the Lord and He counted it to him for righteousness.” Always distinguish between the Truth of God that living faith always produces works, and the lie that faith and works co-operate to justify the soul. We are made righteous only by an act of faith in the work of Jesus Christ. That faith, if true, always produces holiness of life–but our being righteous before God is not because of our holiness in life in any degree or respect, but simply because of our faith in the Divine promise.

Thus says the inspired Apostle: “His faith was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.” I would have you note that the faith which justified Abram was still an imperfect faith, although it perfectly justified him. It was imperfect beforehand, for he had prevaricated as to his wife, and bid Sarai, “Say you are my sister.”

It was imperfect after it had justified him, for in the next chapter we find him taking Hagar, his wife’s handmaid, in order to effect

the Divine purpose, and so showing a lack of confidence in the working of the Lord. It is a blessing for you and for me that we do not need perfect faith to save us! "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, Remove to yonder place, and it shall remove." If you have but the faith of a little child, it shall save you. Though your faith is not always at the same pitch as the Patriarch's when he staggered not at the promise through unbelief, yet if it is simple and true, if it confides alone in the promise of God–it is an unhappy thing that it is no stronger, and you ought daily to pray, "Lord, increase my faith"–but still it shall justify you through Christ Jesus! A trembling hand may grasp the cup which bears a healing draught to the lip–the weakness of the hand shall not lessen the power of the medicine.

So far, then, all is clear–Abram was not justified by works, nor by ceremonies, nor partly by works and partly by faith, nor by the perfection of his faith–he is counted righteous simply because of his faith in the Divine promise. I must confess that looking more closely into it, this text is too deep for me and therefore I decline, at this present moment, to enter into the controversy which rages around it. But one thing is clear to me–if faith is, as we are told, counted to us for righteousness, it is not because faith in itself has merit which may make it a fitting substitute for a perfect obedience to the Law of God. Nor can it be viewed as a substitute for such obedience. For, Brothers and Sisters, all good acts are a duty–to

trust God is our duty–and he that has believed to his utmost has done no more than it was his duty to have done!

He who should believe without imperfection, if this were possible, would even, then, have only given to God a part of the obedience due. And if he should have failed in love, or reverence, or anything beside, his faith, as a virtue and a work, could not stand him in any prestige. In fact, according to the great principle of the New Testament, even faith, as a work, does not justify the soul! We are not saved by works at all or in any sense, but by Divine Grace alone, and the way in which faith saves us is not by itself as a work, but in some other way directly opposite. Faith cannot be its own righteousness, for it is of the very nature of faith to look out of self to Christ.

If any man should say, "My faith is my righteousness," then it is evident that he is confiding in his faith and this is just the thing of all others which it would be unsafe to do, for we must look altogether away from ourselves to Christ alone, or we have no true faith at all. Faith must look to the Atonement and work of Jesus, or else she is not the faith of Scripture. Therefore to say that faith in and of itself becomes our righteousness, is, it seems to me, to tear out the very heart of the Gospel and to deny the faith which has been once delivered to the saints.

Paul declares, contrary to certain sectaries who rail against imputed righteousness–that we are justified and made righteous by

the righteousness of Christ. On this he is plain and positive. He tells us (Rom. 5:19) that, “as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” The Old Testament verse before us as a text this morning, gives us but, as it were, the outward aspect of justification–it is brought to us by faith, and the fact that a man has faith entitles him to be set down as a righteous man. In this sense God accounts faith to a man as righteousness. But the underlying and secret Truth of God which the Old Testament does not so clearly give us is found in the New Testament declaration that we are accepted in the Beloved, and justified because of the obedience of Christ.

Faith justifies, but not in and by itself, but because it grasps the obedience of Christ. “As by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” To the same effect is that verse in the second Epistle of Peter (first chapter, first verse), which runs in our version as follows: “Simon Peter, a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” Now, everybody who is at all familiar with the original knows that the correct translation is, “through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

The righteousness which belongs to the Christian is the righteousness of our God and Savior, who is “made of God unto us righteousness.” Hence the beauty of the old prophetic title of the Messiah, “The Lord our Righteousness.” I do not wish to enter into controversy as to imputed righteousness this morning. We may discuss that doctrine another time. But we feel confident that this text cannot mean that faith in itself, as a Divine Grace or a virtue, becomes the righteousness of any man. The fact is that faith is counted to us for righteousness because she has Christ in her hand–she comes to God resting upon what Christ has done, depending alone upon the Propitiation which God has set forth–and God, therefore, writes down every believing man as being a righteous man, not because of what he is in himself, but for what he is in Christ.

He may have a thousand sins, yet shall he be righteous if he has faith. He may painfully transgress like Samson. He may be as much in the dark as Jephthae. He may fall as David, he may slip like Noah–but, for all that, if he has a true and living faith, he is written down among the justified, and God accepts him! While there are some who gloat over the faults of Believers, God spies out the pure gem of faith gleaming on their breast. He takes them for what they want to be, for what they are in heart, for what they would be if they could–and covering their sins with the atoning blood, and adorning their persons with the righteousness of the Beloved, He

accepts them, seeing He beholds in them the faith which is the mark of the righteous man wherever it may be.

II. Let us pass on to consider THE PROMISE UPON WHICH HIS FAITH RELIED when Abram was justified. Abram's faith, like ours, rested upon a promise received directly from God. "This shall not be your heir; but he that shall come forth out of your own body shall be your heir. And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward Heaven, and count the stars, if you are able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall your descendents be."

Had this promise been spoken by any other, it would have been a subject of ridicule to the Patriarch. But, taking it as from the lips of God, he accepts it and relies upon it. Now, Brothers and Sisters, if you and I have true faith we accept the promise, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved" as being altogether Divine. If such a declaration were made to us by the priests of Rome, or by any human being on his own authority, we would not think it true. But, inasmuch as it comes to us written in the sacred Word of God as having been spoken by Jesus Christ Himself, we lean upon it as not the word of man, but the Word of God.

Beloved, it may be a very simple remark to make, but after all it is necessary that we must be careful that our faith in the Truth of God is fixed upon the fact that God has declared it to be true, and not upon the oratory or persuasion of any of our most honored ministers or most respected acquaintances. If your faith stands in

the wisdom of man, it is probably a faith in man. Remember it is only that faith which believes the promise because God spoke it, which is real faith in God. Note that and test your faith thereby.

In the next place, Abram's faith was faith in a promise concerning the seed. It was told him before that he should have a seed in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. He recognized in this the same promise which was made to Eve at the gates of Paradise, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her Seed." "Abraham saw My day," says our Lord, "he saw it and was glad." In this promise Abram saw the one Seed, as says the Apostle in Galatians 3:16, "He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to your Seed, which is Christ." He saw Christ by the eye of faith, and then he saw the multitude that should believe in Him, the Seed of the father of the faithful.

The faith which justifies the soul concerns itself about Christ and not mere abstract truths. If your faith simply believes this dogma, and that, it saves you not. But when your faith believes that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto them their trespasses. When your faith turns to God in human flesh and rests in Him with its entire confidence, then it justifies you, for it is the faith of Abram.

Dear Hearer, have you such a faith as this? Is it faith in the promise of God? Is it faith that deals with Christ and looks alone to Him? Abram had faith in a promise which it seemed impossible

could ever be fulfilled. A child was to be born of his own loins, but he was nearly 100 years old and Sarai, also, was said to be barren years before! His own body was now dead, as it were, and Sarai, so far as childbearing was concerned, was equally so. The birth of a son could not happen unless the laws of Nature were reversed.

But he considered not these things, he put them all aside. He saw death written on the creature, but he accepted the power of life in the Creator, and he believed without hesitation. Now, Beloved, the faith that justifies us must be of the same kind. It seems impossible that I should ever be saved. I cannot save myself. I see absolute death written upon the best hopes that spring of my holiest resolutions–"In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwells no good thing." I can do nothing. I am slain under the Law. I am corrupt through my natural depravity–yet for all this I believe that through the life of Jesus I shall live and inherit the promised blessing!

It is small faith to believe that God will save you when Divine Graces flourish in your heart and evidences of salvation abound. But it is a grand faith to trust in Jesus in the teeth of all your sins–notwithstanding the accusations of conscience–to believe in Him that justifies not merely the godly but the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). To believe not in the Savior of saints, but in the Savior of sinners, and to believe that if any man sins we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous–this is precious, and is counted unto us for righteousness.

This justifying faith was faith which dealt with a wonderful promise, base and sublime. I imagine the Patriarch, standing beneath the starry sky, looking up to those innumerable orbs realizing he cannot count them! To his outward eye, long accustomed in the land of the Chaldeans to midnight observation, the stars appeared more numerous than they would to an ordinary observer. He looked and looked again with elevated gaze, and the voice said, “So shall your seed be.” Now he did not say, “Lord, if I may be the father of a clan, the progenitor of a tribe, I shall be well content. But it is not credible that countless hosts can ever come of my barren body.”

No, he believed the promise! He believed it just as it stood. I do not hear him saying, “It is too good to be true.” No. God has said it–and nothing is too good for God to do. The greater the Grace of the promise, the more likely it is to have come from Him, for good and perfect gifts come from the Father of Lights. Beloved, does your faith take the promise as it stands in its vastness, in its height and depth and length and breadth? Can you believe that you, a sinner, are nevertheless a child, a son, an heir, an heir of God, joint-heir with Christ Jesus? Can you believe that Heaven is yours, with all its ecstasies of joy? Eternity with its infinity of bliss? God with all His attributes of Glory? Oh, this is the faith that justifies–far-reaching, wide-grasping faith that diminishes not the word of

promise–but accepts it as it stands! May we have more and more of this large-handed faith!

Once more, Abram showed faith in the promise as made to him. Out of his own body a Seed should come, and it was in him and in his Seed that the whole world should be blessed! I can believe all the promises in regard to other people. I find faith in regard to my dear friends to be a very easy matter. But oh, when it comes to close grips, and to laying hold for yourself, here is the difficulty! I could see a friend in 10 troubles, and believe that the Lord would not forsake him. I could read a saintly biography, and finding that the Lord never failed His servant when he went through fire and through water, I do not wonder at it. But when it comes to one's own self, the wonder begins!

Our heart cries, "What is this to me? What am I, and what is my father's house, that such mercy should be mine? I washed in blood and made whiter than snow today! Is it so? Can it be? I made righteous through my faith in Jesus Christ–perfectly righteous! O can it be? What? For me the everlasting love of God, streaming from its perennial fountain? For me the protection of a special Providence in this life, and the provision of a prepared Heaven in the life to come? For me a harp, a crown, a palm branch, a throne! For me the bliss of forever beholding the face of Jesus, and being made like He is, and reigning with Him! It seems impossible!

And yet this is the faith that we must have, the faith which lays on Christ Jesus for itself, saying with the Apostle, “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” This is the faith which justifies! Let us seek more and more of it, and God shall have glory through it.

III. In the third place, let us notice THE ATTENDANTS OF ABRAM’S JUSTIFICATION. With your Bibles open, kindly observe that after it is written his faith was counted to him for righteousness, it is recorded that the Lord said to him, “I am Jehovah that brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.” When the soul is graciously enabled to perceive its complete justification by faith, then it more distinctly discerns its calling.

Then the Believer perceives his privileged separation and discerns why he was convicted of sin, why he was led away from self-righteousness and the pleasures of this world to live the life of faith. Now he sees his high calling and the prize of it, and from the one blessing of justification he argues the blessedness of all the inheritance to which he is called. The more clear a man is about his justification the more will he prize his calling, and the more earnestly will he seek to make it sure by perfecting his separation from the world and his conformity to his Lord.

Am I a justified man? Then I will not go back to that bondage in which I once was held. Am I now accepted of God through faith? Then I will live no longer by sight, as I once did as a carnal man–

when I understood not the power of trusting in the unseen God. One Christian Grace helps another, and one act of Divine Grace casts a reflection upon another. Calling gleams with double glory side by side with the twin star of justification. Justifying faith receives more vividly the promises. “I have brought you,” said the Lord, “into this land to inherit it.” He was reminded again of the promise God made to him years before.

Beloved, no man reads the promises of God with such delight and with such a clear understanding as the man who is justified by faith in Christ Jesus. “For now,” he says, “this promise is mine, and made to me. I have the pledge of its fulfillment in the fact that I walk in the favor of God. I am no longer obnoxious to His wrath. None can lay anything to my charge, for I am absolved through Jesus Christ, and, therefore, if when I was a sinner He justified me, much more, being justified, will He keep His promise to me. If when I was a condemned rebel, He nevertheless in His eternal mercy called me and brought me into this state of acceptance, much more will He preserve me from all my enemies and give me the heritage which He has promised by His Covenant of Grace. A clear view of justification helps you much in grasping the promises of God, therefore seek it earnestly for your soul’s comfort.

Abram, after being justified by faith, was led more distinctly to behold the power of sacrifice. By God’s command he killed three bullocks, three goats, three sheep, with turtle doves and pigeons,

being all the creatures ordained for sacrifice. The Patriarch's hands are stained with blood. He handles the butcher's knife–he divides the beasts, he kills the birds–he places them in an order revealed to him by God's Spirit at the time. There they are. Abram learns that there is no meeting with God except through sacrifice. God has shut every door except that over which the blood is sprinkled. All acceptable approaches to God must be through an atoning sacrifice–and Abram understood this.

While the promise is still in his ears. While the ink is yet wet in the pen of the Holy Spirit, writing him down as justified–he must see a sacrifice, and see it, too, in emblems which comprehend all the Revelation of sacrifice made to Aaron. So, Brothers and Sisters, it is a blessed thing when your faith justifies you if it helps you to obtain more complete and vivid views of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ! The purest and most bracing air for faith to breathe is on Calvary. I do not wonder that your faith grows weak when you fail to consider well the tremendous sacrifice which Jesus made for His people! Turn to the annals of the Redeemer's sufferings given us in the Evangelists. Bow yourself in prayer before the Lamb of God–blush to think you should have forgotten His death which is the center of all history!

Contemplate the wondrous transaction of Substitution once again, and you will find your faith revived! It is not the study of theology. It is not reading books upon points of controversy. It is not

searching into mysterious prophecy which will bless your soul–it is looking to Jesus Crucified! That is the essential nutrition of the life of faith, and mind that you keep to it. As a man already justified, Abram looked at the sacrifice all day long and till the sun went down, chasing away the birds of prey as you must drive off all disturbing thoughts. So must you also study the Lord Jesus, and view Him in all His Characters and offices. Be not satisfied unless you grow in Divine Grace and in the knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Perhaps even more important was the next lesson which Abram had to learn. He was led to behold the Covenant. I suppose that these pieces of the bullock, the lamb, the ram, and the goat were so placed that Abram stood in the midst with a part on this side and a part on that. So he stood as a worshipper all through the day, and towards nightfall, when a horror of great darkness came over him, he fell into a deep sleep. Who would not feel a horror passing over him as he sees the great sacrifice for sin and sees himself involved? There, in the midst of the sacrifice he saw, moving with solemn motion, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp answering to the pillar of cloud and fire which manifested the Presence of God in later days to Israel in the wilderness.

In these emblems the Lord passed between the pieces of the sacrifice to meet His servant and enter into Covenant with him. This has always been the most solemn of all modes of

covenanting–and has even been adopted in heathen nations on occasions of unusual solemnity. The sacrifice is divided and the covenanting parties meet between the divided pieces. The profane interpretation was that they imprecated upon each other the curse that if they broke the covenant they might be cut in pieces as these beasts had been. But this is not the interpretation which our hearts delight in! It is this–it is only in the midst of the sacrifice that God can enter into a Covenant relationship with sinful man. God comes in His glory like a flame of fire, but subdued and tempered to us as with a cloud of smoke in the Person of Jesus Christ. And He comes through the bloody Sacrifice which has been offered once and for all through Jesus Christ on the tree. Man meets with God in the midst of the Sacrifice of Christ!

Now, Beloved, you who are justified, try this morning to reach this privilege which particularly belongs to you at this juncture of your spiritual history. Know and understand that God is in Covenant bonds with you. He has made a Covenant of Grace with you which never can be broken. The sure mercies of David are your portion. After this sort does that Covenant run, “A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them. They shall be My people, and I will be their God.” That Covenant is made with you over the slaughtered body of the Son of God!

God and you cross hands over Him who sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. The Lord accepts us and we

enter with Him into sacred league and amity over the Victim whose wounds and death ratify the compact. Can God forget a Covenant with such sanctions? Can such a federal bond so solemnly sealed be ever broken? Impossible! Man is sometimes faithful to his oath, but God is always so–and when that oath is confirmed for the strengthening of our faith by the blood of the Only-Begotten–to doubt is treason and blasphemy! Godhelpus,being justified, to have faith in the Covenant which is sealed and ratified with blood!

Immediately after, God made to Abram (and here the analogy still holds) a discovery, that all the blessing that was promised, though it was surely his, would not come without an interval of trouble. "Your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them 400 years." When a man is first of all brought to Christ he often is so ignorant as to think, "Now my troubles are all over. I have come to Christ and I am saved–from this day forward I shall have nothing to do but to sing the praises of God."

Alas, a conflict remains! We must understand, for sure, that the battle now begins! How often does it happen that the Lord, in order to educate His child for future trouble, makes the occasion when his justification is most clear to him the season of informing him that he may expect to meet with trouble? I was struck with that fact when I was reading for my own comfort, the other night, the fifth chapter of Romans. It runs thus–"Therefore being justified by faith,

we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

See how softly it flows–a justification sheds the oil of joy upon the Believer's head. But what is the next verse–"and not only so, but we glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation works patience," and so on. Justification ensures tribulation. Oh, yes, the Covenant is yours–you shall possess the goodly land and Lebanon–but, like all the seed of Abraham, you must go down into Egypt and groan, being burdened. All the saints must smart before they sing. They must carry the cross before they wear the crown. You are justified men and women but you are not freed from trouble! Your sins were laid on Christ, but you still have Christ's Cross to carry. The Lord has exempted you from the curse, but He has not exempted you from the chastisement. Learn that you enter on the children's discipline on the very day in which you enter upon their accepted condition.

To close the whole, the Lord gave to Abram an assurance of ultimate success. He would bring his seed into the promised land, and the people who had oppressed them He would judge. So let it come as a sweet revelation to every believing man this morning, that at the end he shall triumph and those evils which now oppress him shall be cast beneath his feet! The Lord shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly. We may be slaves in Egypt for awhile, but

we shall come up out of it with great abundance of true riches–better than silver or gold! We shall be prospered by our tribulations and enriched by our trials!

Therefore let us be of good cheer. If sin is pardoned, we may well bear affliction. "Strike, Lord," said Luther, "now my sins are gone. Strike as hard as You will if transgression is covered." These light afflictions which are but for a moment are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in us. Let us make it the first point of our care to be justified with Abraham's seed, and then whether we sojourn in Egypt or enjoy the peace of Canaan it little matters–we are all safe if we are only justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Dear Friends, this last word, and I send you home. Have you believed in God? Have you trusted Christ? O that you would do so today! To believe that God speaks truth ought not to be difficult, and if we were not very wicked this would never need to be urged upon us–we should do it naturally. To believe that Christ is able to save us seems to me to be easy enough, and it would be if our hearts were not so hard. Believe your God, and think it no little thing to do so!

May the Holy Spirit lead you to a true trust. This is the work of God–that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Believe that the Son of God can save, and confide yourself alone in Him, and He will save you. He asks nothing but faith, and even this He

gives you! And if you have it, all your doubts and sins, your trials and troubles put together shall not shut you out of Heaven! God shall fulfill His promise, and surely bring you in to possess the land which flows with milk and honey. Portions of Scripture read before sermon–Genesis 15 and Romans 4.

Ge 15:11 • Abram and the Ravenous Birds

SERMON 0420

Abram And The Ravenous Birds

"But when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away."

Genesis 15:11

WE might use this text, if we chose, as a picture of the ease with which faith repels all attacks that are made upon Christ, the great sacrifice of the new Covenant. Ainsworth tells us that the original word which we translate "drove" has in it the force of "puffed" them away. As if with a very puff of breath these kites and vultures and eagles, were at once driven away from the bodies of the victims. Faith knows how, when skeptical kites when blaspheming vultures, when speculative eagles come down to attack the sacrifice

of Christ, to chase them away with but a puff of her breath. “We know whom we have believed.”

Let the earth shake, our confidence in Him cannot move. He is to us as real a Person as ourselves. No, we might doubt our own existence, but Jesus, His power, His love, His precious blood, His prevalent atonement we dare not doubt. One puff of the breath of prayer and questions and taunts are gone. One puff of the breath of holy faith in praise and every skeptical attack is scattered to the winds as far as we are concerned. When these fowls come down upon the body of Christ, like Abram by faith we “puff” them away.

But I do not intend to use the text with such an object this morning, though one might legitimately do so. It seems to me to represent to us our duty when distracting thoughts invade the sanctity of our holy worship. Here is Abram. He has killed the victims according to Divine order. He has laid them in their places according to heavenly rule. He is waiting until God shall over those victims make and ratify the covenant. But meanwhile the buzzards and kites and vultures scent the bodies from afar and hasten to devour the flesh of the bullock and the ram. Abram chases them away that so his sacrifice may not be spoiled and he may have real fellowship with God.

Brothers and sisters, we never attempt to worship God without finding many difficulties in the way.

“What various hindrances we meet,

In coming to a mercy seat!”

We in our assemblies are like the angels in theirs, “When the sons of God came together, Satan came also among them.” We find that wherever we may be and in whatever frame of mind or with whatever earnestness we may attempt to worship God, there always is a servant with us who must be told to stop at the foot of the mountain white we go and worship God. If not, our offerings will not be profitable to ourselves, nor acceptable before God.

I shall attempt this morning, in dealing with this subject, first to enumerate some of those foul birds which come upon our sacrifice. Secondly, to show the necessity in driving them away. And thirdly, how we are to do it.

First then, LET US MENTION SOME OF THOSE WELL-KNOWN INTRUDERS WHICH ARE PERPETUALLY MOLESTING OUR PEACE AND DISTURBING OUR SERVICE.

First, there are wicked thoughts–the sons of Satan. These respect no sacred places. The sanctity of our closet has been violated with thoughts of lust–the dignity of the mercy seat has not sufficed to repress the vile insinuations of blasphemy. Wickedness, though it dwells no more in the heart of the believer, yet seeks to find a lodging there. And well does it effect its purpose at times for it tarries like a wayfaring man for a night, lingering there sufficiently long to mar our devotion and to prevent our having joy in

fellowship with God. Have you not found these thoughts intruding into your house and on the Sabbath have not unhallowed things vexed you in the Sanctuary of God itself? Have you not found the sons of Belial still tormenting you? You would sing God's praise–perhaps a snatch of some unholy song suggests itself.

You would pray unto God, but in your very access to the mercy seat you meet some fiend-like doubt. You would listen to the voice of God with all attention but wicked temptations distract you. You would thank God with all your soul, but folly comes in to shut your mouth and prevent your praise. The very best of the saints have need to hold up their shield to keep off the fiery darts of Satan. Upon the best ground that ever was plowed with the Gospel plow Satan will scatter the worst seed. Tares will come up in God's most fruitful field–there will be spots, even in our solemn feasts–there will be these birds upon our most hallowed sacrifices.

But we must resolutely resist these harpies. These evil ones are not to be allowed at any time–but much less in the service of God. We must guard against them at all times and in all seasons, but much more when we stand in the presence of Him who says, "Put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stands is holy ground." In company with these foul vultures fly those ravenous kites called worldly thoughts which spring from the force of habit. The wheels have been running the last six days in this direction–it is not quite so easy to reverse the action and to make

them go the other way. We have been sinking, sinking, sinking in the miry clay of daily business–it is not very easy for the soul that lies cleaving to the dust to rise at once towards Heaven.

It is no wonder when you have so many things to think of in this acre of competition that the ledger should lie there in front of the pew instead of the Bible–and that at times the day-book should come in when your hand holds the hymnbook, or that you should be thinking of a bad debt, or of a long account which is rather precarious–instead of meditating upon the faithfulness of God and of pardons bought with blood. These traffickers molest the very temple and we have not always the scourge of small cords to drive them out nor the commanding presence of the Savior, to say, "Take these things hence, it is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves."

How many a mother comes here with all her tribe of children on her shoulders? How many a father comes here with thoughts of where he shall apprentice his eldest son or what shall become of his younger daughter? How many a merchant comes in and every wind that makes the windowpanes rattle reminds him of his ships at sea? How many a farmer is thinking of his land and the fitful gleams of sunshine and returning showers make him remember his cattle and his crops? Shops and stalls, bushels and scales, silks and cottons, horses and cows and even meaner things intrude into your house, O King of kings! Brethren, how often do some of you indulge in

them? I hope there are none of you who keep your account books on Sunday and yet how common is this in London!

There are some who shut up their shop in front and keep it open at the back–as if they would serve the devil and cheat the Lord! If you register your ledgers on Sunday, why not open your shop? You might as well be in the shop as in the country house–the sin is just the same–only you now add hypocrisy to it–by pretending to serve God when you do not. But how many there are, sure believers in Christ, who would scorn to look at the ledger on the Sunday–and yet their mind is hampered with accounts and debtor and creditor will be striking balances continually in their brain?

Some professors on the Sabbath afternoon will be talking about the state of the markets and asking, "What do you think of the rise and fall of Consols?" "When will this terrible American war be over?" "When is it likely the Manchester factories will obtain full employment by the arrival of ship loads of cottons," or "How will Louis Napoleon pay his debts?" When they come up to the house of God in the evening they wonder how it is they do not get on with the preacher. The preacher might wonder how he could be of any service to such hearers. They wonder that the Sabbath is not a refreshment to them. But how is it likely to be when they still continue in their worldly employments–giving their hearts really to the world–though they profess to give their bodily presence to the service of Christ?

Besides wicked and worldly thoughts, another set of ravens will be croaking over us. I mean anxious thoughts which are the fruits of our unbelief. “Oh,” says one, “how can I help it? If you knew my condition in business, you would not marvel that care will come in today! Loss after loss, continually going backward, though with energy and perseverance I seek to make progress. A large family–a once extensive connection–the constant fear of ruin–how can I hope to chase away anxious thoughts and carking cares on the day of rest?” My Brother, I make many excuses for you. But while I make all excuses, let me remind you that it is written, “Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”

At least today there is no need that you should carry that burden. Why, it will be none the worse for this one day’s letting alone–and it certainly will be none the better for this blessed day being wasted in fretting and worrying yourself. What if the burden is heavy? Is it not enough to carry it six days? Why do you need to carry it on the seventh? What if the toil is severe–and we will allow that it is–is not that the more reason why you should shorten the hours of your labor and not give the whole seven days to it?

On this day pour out before God–empty out your troubles at His feet and leave in His hands your difficulties and your trials–believing that He knows them all and knows how to make them all work for your good. These carking cares must be chased away just

as much as wicked thoughts, for “after all these things do the Gentiles seek.”

But sometimes in our prayers and in our Sabbath worship we are disturbed by those carrion crows called annoying thoughts, the offspring of our vanity. I will just mention some of them that you will think, perhaps, rather odd. But I have no doubt you know them. We have known, sometimes, a sister come to worship and she notices–“Why, Mrs. Soand-So is dressed differently from what she was last Sunday and she had a new bonnet the Sunday before!” O silly soul, to be allured like a butterfly with colors and flowers!

Then, look at yonder Brother. There is So-and-So sitting in the opposite gallery that he did not want to see today at any rate, for he does not like the man and he feels that his very presence is a detriment and a drawback to the possibility of devotion. Or, perhaps, my Brethren, as you came in there was some little mistake at the door or when our friend got to the pew he found it occupied by somebody else. Or he is not occupying just the door-seat where he likes to sit. Or, perhaps, he is standing in an inconvenient place. You know these are all trifles, complete trifles, the most despicable of things. But how many there are that irritate themselves about them? And why?

Because they have so high an opinion of their own dignity that they think these little things ought not to be endured by them. No, Sir, the aisle should be carpeted up which you walk–there should

be an air cushion always provided, gratis, for you. There should be treadles on purpose to show you into the seat–and when you are there–every objectionable person in the congregation should be removed and everything should be done for your personal comfort! You say, "No, I am not so foolish as that." I do not know that, my dear Sir–there is the germ of it in most of us.

We want so many of these little punctilious and if we are not duly honored we cannot worship with comfort. The thought of seeing God and enjoying the light of His countenance has not sufficient power over the carnal hearts of some to make them forget all the little inconveniences that must occur in vast assemblies and in a great house like this in which we are gathered. There are some fretty-tempered souls that cannot worship because some trifle not worth a moment's notice has disturbed their minds. Now, these feelings must be striven against–this vanity is not to be allowed in any one of us.

We must denounce it and chase it out–for it only makes us little in the esteem of others. And if we could but see ourselves, it wound make us contemptible in our own sight. Oh, bless His name, when a soul is hungry, it little matters how it gets its Food. When a heart is really set on finding Christ, the man will care but little what may be his comfort or his discomfort. Only let the Truth of Jesus come into the soul, let him feed on its marrow and its fatness and he will say, "I would rather be doorkeeper" (and that is a very

objectionable office for anybody–if any of you tried it you would find it very inconvenient to worship God after having kept the door of the Tabernacle). “I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than dwell with comfort and with ease in the tents of the wicked.”

But I will mention a brood of eagles which will haunt Mount Zion–I mean ecclesiastical anxieties. And what do I mean by these? Why, that sometimes when our minds should be perfectly free for worshipping God–Church business, perhaps Church differences–thrust themselves upon us. The deacon thinks he may worry himself a little about something that has occurred with the poor. The elder thinks it would be justifiable to be thinking over the case of such-andsuch a refractory individual whose case has troubled him. The member thinks he may be fretting about the dullness of the minister. The minister thinks he may be groaning because some in the galleries have not joined the Church. And mark–all these are good things in their places–but they have no business at all with us when we come up to God’s house to worship Him.

Then these birds, even though they are like the sparrows that build under the eaves of the altar, must be driven away. Until we can get rid of them all we shall not find the day of rest such as it should be nor will our worship be acceptable before the Throne of God. Nor shall our own souls derive the joy they ought to have from the service and presence of the Lord.

Probably in this description I have not yet touched your case but I will not try again, for I think you can yourself remember many things which haunt you. Many a ship has been built here without a dry dock. Many a wagonload of corn has been sold here without a sample bag. Many a broad acre has been planted in this chapel–many a hundred head of oxen has been sold here. Many a loom has been set a-going, many a vessel has been navigated, many a new shop front constructed and many a building erected–when you might have been worshipping God. For in all our worship there are those who will be sending their minds gadding abroad over mountains of vanity when they ought to be sitting still to see and to understand the salvation of God.

II. I have described the birds. I have indicated the intruders. I have raised the hue and cry against them. Let me now seek to STIR YOU UP TO CHASE THEM AWAY.

Distracting cares must be driven away, first, for your own sake. Brethren, some of us have been alarmed to see how the lunatic asylums are everywhere needing fresh wings and the number of inmates so rapidly increasing. If there is one reason above all others for this, I venture to assert it is the neglect of the Sabbath Day. No human brain can bear the perpetual toils of business except it knows how to pause and oil the machinery by turning the mind in some other direction. Here we have merchants whose brains are exercised from the time they rise till the time they go to

rest, yes, and their very dreams are disturbed by great schemes and plans.

And then, when the first day of the week comes, they are scheming still. Instead of pulling up and letting the horses of the mind take a rest so that they may start afresh in the chariot on the next week- day, it is on, on, on, on–and then they wonder that the poor creatures at last flag with weariness, or even drop dead upon the road. Flog them as you will, your minds cannot keep always at this stretch. We, whose hardest toil is on this day and who find that the great cares of a Church so large as this will follow us to our bed and that all the days of the week we are occupied thereby–find it to be one of our sternest trials to resist the fear that our reason may reel.

It is too hard for any man, even for the minister of God, to be always thinking, always working–even though that work be for God Himself. You know what Solomon says. He says–"If the iron is blunt and he does not whet the edge, then must he have more strength–but wisdom is profitable to direct," by which he means to say if the man would stop and whet his tool, it would be sharp and he would not need to expend half the strength–and he would do far more work. But here you have some who think the Sunday must be all work, work, work. Instead of which, if they were to stop to whet the edge of the tool, they would do far more in the end, while their soul would not be half so soon worn out.

You have heard persons say, “I would sooner wear out than rust out.” There is no occasion for either if we would but keep this day of rest as a perfect rest to our heart and soul. But that we can never do unless we love Christ for a Sabbath is an impossibility to an unconverted man. If we would but, as Christians resting in Christ keep this first day of rest–giving our souls thorough ease–there would be no fear of the brain giving way. We should labor on, even to a good old age and then die in peace and our works would follow us. I cannot expect you to believe me if I should say you can carry on your business all the days of the week without care, without diligence, without very earnest thought. We must be “diligent in business,” and you must put both your hands to the wheel if you would make it go.

But do leave the wheel alone today. Now, have done with it. You will madden yourself, or, if it come not to so sad a climax as that you will destroy your comfort, destroy the acuteness of your mental powers if you do not give them rest today. I am no preacher of the old legal Sabbath, those who are teachers of the Law insist upon that quite enough. As for me, I am a preacher of the Gospel and rejoice that believers are not “under the Law, but under grace.” A worldling is under the Law and it is his duty to remember the seventh day to keep it holy for so runs the Law which is his taskmaster.

But I am not under the Law and therefore I keep this day–not the seventh, but the first day of the week on which my Savior rose again from the dead–keep it not of Law, but of grace–keep it not as a slavish bondage, not as a day on which I am chained and hampered with restraints against my will. But I keep it as a day in which I may take holy pleasure in serving God and in adoring before His Throne. The Sabbath of the Jew is to him a task. The Lord's Day of the Christian, the first day of the week, is to him a joy, a day of rest, of peace and of thanksgiving. And if you Christian men can earnestly drive away all distractions so that you can really rest today it will be good for your bodies, good for your souls, good mentally, good spiritually, good temporally and good eternally.

Let me give you a second reason. You will find if you are able to take a perfect rest by driving away these evil thoughts when you are worshipping God, that you will do your work during the other days of the week far better. It was an old Popish folly to try and tell what kind of weather there would be by the weather on Sunday–"If it rains before mass, rain all the week more or less." Now, we do not believe that literally, but we do believe it in a spiritual sense. If you have a bad Sabbath-Day, you will have a bad week but if you have a good day of rest you will find it good with your souls the whole week long. Not that you will be without trouble all the

week–that would not be good for you–but you shall never be without grace during the week.

Nor if you have peace on the Sunday shall you be without peace on the Monday. The old Puritans used to say, “The first day of the week was the market-day.” And you know in the country villages in those times, their being fewer shops than there are now, they went to market to lay in stock for the week and if the good wife bought a small quantity of cheese, or meat, why then they were on short commons the whole week through. So is it with us. This is our market-day and if we gain but little today we shall have slender diet during the other days. But if we get the basket loaded well–if we have reason to say, “The Lord has satisfied my soul with fatness and caused my spirit to delight in His Word”–you will find that during the week your peace shall be like a river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.

And then let me remind you, in the next place, that the character of this day demands that you should get rid of these thoughts. This is the day on which God said, “Let there be light and there was light.” This is the day on which Christ rose again from the dead for our justification. Christ’s finished atonement made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness on this blessed day. This is the day on which the Holy Spirit came down from Heaven–the day on which the rushing mighty wind and the cloven tongues descended upon the Apostles. Therefore, according to apostolic

custom, do we keep this day as the day of light, the day of resurrection, the day of the descent of the Holy Spirit the Comforter.

Now, it is inconsistent with such a day–the day of light–for us to be in darkness. It is inconsistent with the day of resurrection for us to be raking in this grave of the world. It is inconsistent with this day of the descent of the Spirit for us to be thinking of carnal things and forgetting the things which are above. It was a Romish tradition that on Easter morning the sun always danced–and to my mind on this day when Jesus rose and left the dead, if the sun does not dance, our heart does. And if the world is not clad in sunlight, yet our soul is. And if today the very sea does not clap its hands for gladness, yet shall our voices send forth gladsome Psalms.

Oh, this is not the day of bondage. Go under the whip of Moses who choose it to be so. This is the day of freedom and of delight–the day of peace and calm and rest and tranquility. Work and thoughts of work, doubts, fears, legality, selfrighteousness are all inconsistent with the spirit of the day, for Christ has said, "It is finished!" So we must cease to work, too, not only with our hands but with our souls–working no more for life, for that is given. Working no more for justification–for that is concluded. But today resting in Christ, for "It is finished!" And finding peace in Him, for "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

We must leave all our cares with Him, for “nothing can separate us from the love of Christ” and then give up our souls to a glorious and victorious holy day which shall be a preparation for the eternal enjoyment of the perpetual feast of the glorified at the table of God in Heaven.

Now, for this reason–because they are so inconsistent with this day–I pray you get rid of all these obnoxious thoughts. George Herbert has put all I could say and far more, into two or three of his quaint verses, which I will give you–

“The other days and you
Make up one man; whose face you are,
Knocking at Heaven with your brow–
The working days are the back part;
The burden of the week lies there,
Making the whole to stoop and bow,
Till your release appears.
Sundays the pillars are,
On which Heaven’s palace arched lies–
The other days fill up the spare
And hollow room with vanities.
They are the fruitful beds and borders
In God’s rich garden–that is bare
Which parts their ranks and orders.
You are a day of mirth–

And where the weekdays trail on ground,
O let me take you at the bound,
Leaping with you from seven to seven,
Till that we both, being tossed from earth,
Fly hand in hand to Heaven!"

Oh that is the true way of living–leaping from seven to seven, passing over the six days, that we may get once more to the solid resting place of the day of rest. Be it so with you, Brethren, so when the fowls come down upon the sacrifice you may chase them away.

Another argument. The vain or anxious thought, when we are engaged in the worship of God, must be striven against because it must be grievous to the Holy Spirit. How can we expect that we shall have His presence and His assistance if we give Him not our hearts? Good Mr. Manton says, "If a man should send to a place of worship a skin stuffed with straw, it would be thought to be an insult but he might as well do that as go there himself with his mind stuffed with vanities." Was it not a crime of old–"This people draws near to Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me"? Can you conceive it enough to make long prayers if your minds are occupied all the while about the widow's house, or courting the approbation of man?

It is vain for us to bring these oblations unto God, for His requirement is, "My son, give Me your heart." How can the Lord,

the high and lofty God ever accept the sacrifice where the heart is not found? It was considered to be one of the worst omens in the Roman sacrifices if the augurs discovered that the victim had no heart. So it must always be an ill omen to us, if in our worship our heart is not set on God and intently engaged in His service. O Spirit of God! how many of us have lost our comfort and the joy and peace of our faith because we have not–when we have been upon our knees or engaged in sacred Songs, or in listening to the Word–compelled our thoughts to keep at home and bow down to the Most High?

What do you think? If you were in the presence of a king would he consider it to be comely or decent if you should forget what you came there for? If while you offered your petition your mind should be engaged on other matters? Or if you should turn your back upon him to gaze out of the windows while His Majesty spoke to you? And what are you doing when your soul is looking to worldliness while God's own face is speaking to you and His Word is being read in your ears? Oh, this is to insult the Most High. Angels veil their faces and shall our eyes be gadding abroad? Angels bow themselves before Him and continually cry, "Holy, holy, holy" and shall we insult the Divine Majesty by coming here with unholy thoughts, or with unhallowed anxieties, not veiling our faces, but permitting them to receive all that the light of day can reveal to us of vanity, of deceit and of care? O God! Give us grace

to know what You are–then shall we understand how You are to be worshipped in spirit and in Truth!

I shall add once more–these thoughts and cares must be driven away for if you do not strive against them they will increase and multiply. This is a growing habit. I have not to complain in this congregation of any want of attention during the service but I have had the pain of seeing assemblies where the wandering eye has been indulged till at last it would be as pleasant and perhaps as profitable to address a load of bricks as to address the people who were assembled. They come in listlessly, some of them a half-an-hour after the service begins. And in some where the habit has grown worse and worse, the minister generally knows when to leave off because he sees the friends are coming in to see the others go out.

They come gradually later and later and become more and more careless about what is uttered till an angel from Heaven would scarcely make them keep open their heavy eyes and a Prophet sent from God could not stir their stolid souls. The force of habit is like the velocity of a falling stone–it increases in ever multiplying proportions. If I have indulged one unbelieving thought, there has always been another to follow it. If I have allowed some little disturbance in the congregation to cast me down and distract my thoughts there has been another and another and another–till I have

been in the pitiable condition of a minister who has been half afraid of his congregation.

And it will be so with you. We must strive against it! We must get rid of these carking thoughts! We must chase these birds from the sacrifice! Away with you! Away with you! We cannot have you here! We must, we will worship God and if one effort will not give us quiet, we must try again–for it must be done–or else we shall destroy our peace and render the Sabbath as hard a day as any of the other days of the week, while the service of God will be to us a vanity and to Him a vain oblation.

III. I am now, then, in the last place, to try and briefly SHOW YOU HOW TO DO IT.

And we begin by saying first of all, set your heart upon it, for when the soul is set upon a thing then it is likely to accomplish it. Go up to God's house, saying, "I must give my soul to eternal matters today and I will. My soul cries after God as a thirsty stag in the wilderness brays after the water-brooks. O God, my heart is fixed today. I must have done with earth, I must begin with Heaven, I must say to all cares, sit still and I must say to my soul, Wake up my glory, wake, psaltery and harp, I myself will awake right early to praise God. And when the soul is thus set upon the matter there will be half the battle already fought and the victory almost won.

But when you have done this, remember next let the preparation of your heart before coming to the sacrifice assist you when you shall be there. We are told men ought not to preach without preparation. Granted. But we add, men ought not to hear without preparation. Which, think you, needs the most preparation, the sower or the ground? I would have the sower come with clean hands but I would have the ground well plowed and harrowed, well turned over and the clods broken before the seed is cast in. It seems to me that there is more preparation needed by the ground than by the sower–more by the hearer than by the preacher.

But this is forgotten–men come to market having made up their minds what they want to sell and what they will buy–and they give their attention to how markets go and they act accordingly. But when men come into these places of worship they do not know what they want–they come they know not what for. Perhaps it is to see the place, or hear the preacher–and they go away and they have no spiritual profit. How could they? What profit would a man make if he went there without a purpose and stayed there without looking after his own interests? Prepare your hearts privately by communion with God and you shall have communion with Him in public. Meet God in your house and you shall meet Him in His house. What if the preacher should not profit you?–it is not the preacher you came after, but his God.

Be but wakeful and you will meet his God in the hymn, or in the chapter. Your heart must be in a right state beforehand. You know, Brethren, if you have a lake and the water is all rippled, there may be a cedar standing on its banks, but there cannot be perfect reflection when the water is disturbed. But when the water is as clear as glass, then whatever there is on the bank is reflected. Ah, you must bring your heart calm and quiet to the house of God or else there cannot be an unbroken reflection of the image of God upon your spirits. Oh, seek to come up here as a bride adorned for her husband–as wedding guests going to the wedding feast with their garments on–expecting that they shall be made glad. Come here as hungry ones pleading for food and thirsty souls all longing for the Water of Life.

But, this done, above all, cry to the Spirit of God for help to make your spirit rest. You have trouble. He is the Comforter. You have infirmities. But "the Spirit itself also helps our infirmities." You have sins. But the Spirit of God applies the peace-speaking blood of Christ, gives you rest in conscience. Cry unto Him! Cry unto Him as a little child cries to its parent when it has attempted something which it cannot perform. Say, "Farther, help me! I would worship You–O enable me to do so. I would see You–touch my eyes with heavenly eye-salve. I would hear You–open my ears today to Your voice and seal them up to all beside. I would feed on You–Lord, open my lips for You, the Bread of Heaven and let me

feed on nothing save Yourself." This done, He is a God that hears prayer and He will grant you the desire of your heart.

Then, when you have thus done and you come up to the house of God, still seek to continue in the same frame of mind, remembering in whose immediate Presence you are. A Spartan youth was holding the censor at a sacrifice when Alexander was offering a victim. It chanced that while he held the censor a hot coal fed upon his hand. The youth stood still and never flinched, lest by any utterance or cry the sacrifice should be disturbed. For he said he was in the presence of Alexander and he would not have the sacrifice interrupted for him. And thus he bore the pain of the burning coal.

Let us remember that Spartan youth, but adding to what he said–"We are in the Presence of the Almighty God." Then, if there is something which annoys us let us bear it unflinchingly, for we stand before Him for whom it is blessed to suffer and who will surely reward them that seek Him in spirit and in Truth. It is written in Josephus that certain of the Jewish priests, at the time of the taking of the temple, were standing at the altar. They were waving to and fro the slowed censers and offering their prayers and their victims. The Romans rushed in, sword in hand. There were shrieks and cries, murders and deaths.

The pavement was stained with blood. But the priests took no notice whatever, nor would they turn from their sacrifice till they were themselves slain. Oh, for something of their devotedness to

God, that even death itself might not interrupt our songs! But when it comes may we be found wrapped in meditation, high hymning our great Creator, expecting His glory and waiting for His appearance. Many instances we might quote of the attention which the superstitious heathen paid to their worship. Shall we be behind them in the reality and sincerity of our adoration of the Most High and Holy God? No, let us, keeping our minds always fixed upon beholding the face of God, thus seek to chase away the birds from the sacrifice.

Another means I will give you–take care that your faith is in active exercise, or else you cannot chase away those thoughts. Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Be still and know that He is God. Trust in Him at all times. Pour out your hearts before Him. Wait on the Lord, be of good courage. Depend upon His power and His wisdom and thus you shall have no thought to trouble you of what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, or whether you shall be clothed. But like the birds of the air, the lilies of the valley which keep perpetual Sabbath, so shall you sing and rest and Christ shall be glorified in you.

Take care also that you attend a ministry which draws you from earth–for there are some dead ministries which make the Sabbath-Day more intolerable than any of the other days of the week. Such are the controversial ministries in which the brain is set to ivory and exercised and troubled with questions and dilemmas and

disputes and contentions. I will not say it is wicked to preach such sermons on the Sabbath-Day. But I will say it is not consistent with Sabbath rest, for that rest is as much for the soul as for the body. The Sabbath was not made alone for the animal part of us, but for the spirit, that it might have a deep, profound calm, the ante past of the rest which remains for the people of God.

Seek a ministry that is full of Christ, full of Covenant faithfulness. A ministry not of "of" and "but," but of "shall" and "will." Seek a ministry which vindicates the Spirit's power. Which, while it teaches fully the sinner's abject helplessness, dwells much upon the absolute Omnipotence of God to save. Seek one which preaches a full Christ for empty sinners, whose theme is death and resurrection, whose object it is to make Christ precious to your heart and so to compel you to trust in Him. Thus you shall find it more easy to rest on the Sabbath-Day than if you should attend under the legal preaches whose theme is moral duties. Or under the mere doctrinal preacher whose object is contention and fighting. Or under the mere experimental preacher whose aim shall be to stir up the filthy mud of your heart–instead of pouring into you the pure clean water of the Truth as it is in Jesus.

O my Brothers and Sisters! I know how many there are of you who look forward all the week long to this day. And there are times when some of us, when we awake in the morning can spring from our beds saying, "Thank God, this is the day of rest." Today we can

say, “Now, I am not to go to my toil today–farewell, the bricklayer’s trowel or the carpenter’s hammer–I have not to go to my books today. The high stool and the desk and the pen are put away. I am not today to look after the servants and the fields and the barn. Not today to walk along the shop and see how trade is prospering or how it is receding. It is all over now. Just nail up those doors and leave them alone–have nothing to do with them.

“Do not tell me that I have a house, or that I have anything to think of, except Christ Jesus, His Father and the Holy Spirit. Get you gone, vain thoughts! I cannot meddle with you, keep your distance, I have had enough of you. You have had your six days and you have pinched and pained me enough. Now my soul has passed through the wilderness, sits down at the well of Elim, sends down its pitcher, draws up draughts of rest, climbs the tree path, plucks the sweet fruits and enjoys them in anticipation of the feast before the Throne of God.”

Ah, this will be good for your bodies, good for your souls, good for you in all respects. And my sermon shall not be in vain this morning if I have made you think every Sunday, “The birds will come down on the carcasses, but I will drive them away.” Nor will it be in vain if, by God’s grace, you will come to look not only on this one day but on your seasons of prayer and meditation as being unloading seasons. When the ship that has been sinking in the water almost to its edge and seems as if it would go down

altogether is unloaded–and rises up and floats higher than it did before. When the eagle gets the chain untied and leaps from the rock, up to its own native eyrie in the skies–when your poor bandaged captive soul that has been lying in the dark dungeon comes out to perfect liberty and takes its stroll abroad, forgetful of the prison and the chain.

Oh, for those heavens on earth–those precious queens of days! Time is the ring and these Sabbaths are the diamonds set in it. The ordinary days are but the walks in the garden, hand trod and barren. But the Sabbaths are the beds full of rich choice flowers. This day is Care's balm and cure, the couch of time, the haven of divine calms. Come, my soul, throw yourself upon this couch. For now the bed is long enough and the coverlet is broad enough–rest and take your ease–for you have come unto Jesus, to a finished sacrifice, to a completed righteousness and your soul may be satisfied in the Lord and your spirit may rejoice in the Lord your God. This is to keep Sabbath-Days.

An unconverted man cannot do this and there are many of you, I fear, here present who never knew what Sabbath means–never had a Lord's Day in your lives. In vain do you keep the day unless your hearts keep it too. Oh, may your hearts know how to find in Christ a perfect rest! Then shall the land have rest and shall keep her Sabbaths. May God give you grace to know your sin and enable you to fly to the Savior and find in Him all your soul wants. May

He enable you to rest in Christ today and then you shall keep Sabbaths on earth till you keep the eternal Sabbath before the Throne, “for thus says the Spirit, They rest from their labors.”

“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ” and you shall have rest. Trust Him and so shall you be saved and your spirit shall be at ease.

Ge 15:11 • Driving Away the Vultures from the Sacrifice

SERMON 1993

D*riving The Vultures Away From The Sacrifice*

"And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away."

Genesis 15:11

ABRAHAM, when he was childless, received the amazing promise that his seed should be as the stars of Heaven for number. This he believed and his faith in Jehovah "was counted unto him for righteousness." Surely there is more righteousness in trusting the Lord than in all the works of the flesh! Those who speak lightly of faith are of a different mind from the Lord, whose judgment is according to truth.

For the confirmation of the Patriarch's faith, the Lord resolved to give to His servant a gracious visitation which should be regarded as the solemn making of a covenant–and also as a prophecy of the future history of the promised seed. Abram was bid to bring victims–a heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtledove and a pigeon. The language is peculiar–"The Lord said unto him, Take Me an heifer of three years old." And then in the next verse we read, "And he took unto Him all these." Thus God and His servant each took part in the sacrifice–and so they set forth in symbol the communion which the Lord God has with His people in the Covenant of Grace, as they meet together in that one great Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, which is the soul and essence of all the outward offerings. It was an offering taken for God which the Lord accepted, but it was, also, an offering taken unto Himself by Abraham, who saw Christ's day–saw it, and was glad.

The man of God obeyed the command of God with great exactness and deliberation, laying the pieces of the sacrifice in due order and then waiting upon God until He should be pleased to further reveal Himself. But what is this? The solemn service is disturbed by foul birds! The most intense devotion is liable to interruptions of the worst sort. In the East, if a camel falls dead in the desert, the air is almost immediately full of winged things. Vultures that had not been visible before, not so much as one of them, will suddenly appear, as if by magic, coming from every

quarter and circling over the carcass. “Wherever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”

These and smaller carnivorous birds are the scavengers of warm countries and do not long allow any flesh to remain uneaten. So, doubtless, when the victims presented by the Patriarch Abram were laid upon the altar, they spied the bodies from afar and hastened to the prey. It was nothing to the vultures, whether they were victims slaughtered for God, or creatures that had fallen dead on the plain, for true to their instinct, they discovered the carcasses and flew to them, even as Job said of the eagle, “Where the slain are, there is she.” Flights of buzzards, kites and carrion crows began to make their appearance in the sky and they would have swooped down upon the sacrifices and defiled them, or borne them away piece-meal, if the Patriarch, who had presented the sacrifices, had not kept watch at the altar! This he did right earnestly and vigorously, so that we read in the text, “When the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.” When we meet with God, we must be serious and resolute in His worship–and if difficulties arise, we must encounter them with all our might–resolving that we will offer to God a sacrifice which shall not be torn in pieces by distracting influences.

Observe that Abram, when he had done as God had told him, and had brought the victims and laid them in their places, did not go home in a hurry and say, “It is near sundown. Sarah will expect me

in the tent." No, he remained by the sacrifice! He did not grudge the time, nor feel a sense of weariness. He loved the worship of God and, therefore, lingered at the altar till the sun was going down. Nothing is to be hurried in devotion! Never is haste more out of place than in Divine worship! The habit of quiet waiting upon God, of never being in a hurry to be gone, the willingness to give time and thought to the service of God is not so common as one could wish. But when a man is thoroughly devout and God's Spirit has spoken with him, he is not satisfied to merely give the allotted time to Divine service or to private devotion, he loathes to be gone! He would be the first in the House of the Lord and the last out of it. He can wait the Lord's leisure and not grow impatient, even if, hour after hour, the converse is not closed. The longer, the better, when God is near us. And if the blessing seems far away and it does not come all of a sudden, the gracious worshipper waits until it does come, for he would not go away without the benediction of the Lord!

When we are serving the Lord, our holy anxiety must not abate till we are fairly through with the service. Abram had laid the victims on the altar, but as yet no fire from Heaven had consumed them and so he remained on the spot to see that all was well to the end. The servant of the Lord does not quit his place till he has seen the matter through. For fear that all should yet be spoiled, he sets himself to watch. When, therefore, the kites and carrion crows

come down, the waiting Patriarch is there to meet them. Had he gone away in haste to attend to his ordinary duties, the sacrifice had been stolen, or polluted. But he waits and does well in waiting. My Soul, wait only upon God, even as a maid waits on her mistress! Watch and pray and watch still. “Blessed are all they that wait for Him.”

They that can be at leisure with God, who do not hurry over what they have to do and who feel that their time is God’s time–these are the true sons of Abraham! If any worldly business would hurry them away, they will not permit it. They give men the cold shoulder rather than rob their Lord and, rob themselves, by hasty worship. Till their appointment with God is over, they are at no man’s call. They cannot break up their interview with God, but must tarry and wait His utmost time. Lest anything unforeseen should happen and spoil their service, they will wait till the sun goes down, and even if sleep overtakes them, they will be where the Lord will meet with them in the night-watches if He so shall favor them. It is wise to never leave our devotions till God, Himself, has pronounced the dismissal by a benediction, has given the blessing to the fullest and so has bid His servants go in peace.

I think that this staying of Abram to defend the sacrifice when the ravenous birds came down upon it may be used as a lesson to us in three respects. First, let us zealously guard the great Sacrifice of Christ. When the foul birds, which are so numerous, especially just

now, come down upon the Sacrifice, let us drive them away! Secondly, let us guard that minor sacrifice, the grateful sacrifice of ourselves. When the birds of temptation come down upon it, let us drive them away. Thirdly, let us anxiously guard those separate sacrifices of devotion which come out of our dedicated lives. When anything comes down to disturb us in prayer or praise, let us resolve that we will drive it away. Oh that the Spirit of All Grace may bless this discourse to us, that we may thereby be excited to holy watchfulness!

First, with regard to THE GREAT SACRIFICE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. This has been and always will be the great object of attack by the enemies of God. One would have said, if one had not known human nature, that the doctrine of the Substitutionary Sacrifice, Christ dying in our place, would, of all events, have commanded the loving confidence of every human heart. It is so wonderful a system, this plan by which justice is vindicated and mercy is magnified, that one instinctively expects all men to reverently accept it. It would seem too grave a charge to bring against our apostate race that they would set to work to quibble at the Divine expedient–and so pick holes in their own salvation–and try to contradict the kindest hope that God, Himself, could set before them!

But so it has been. The preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness! It is still to the Jews a stumbling block and to

the Greeks, foolishness, though it is, indeed, the power of God and the wisdom of God. It has happened according to the Word of the Lord, “Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense.” Therefore, dear Friends, all of you who by faith approach the Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus and who base your hopes of Heaven thereon, watch lest the vultures come down upon the Sacrifice–and be ready to drive them away!

Note well that the sacrifice which Abraham guarded was of Divine ordination. Jehovah Himself had told him what creatures to kill, how to divide them and how to arrange the pieces upon the altar. Abram did nothing according to his own invention–he offered no will-worship–he did everything as it was prescribed to him. Because this sacrifice was Divinely appointed, he could not bear that kites and crows should peck at it and tear it at their pleasure. It is even so with the Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ–my blood boils that so many men should dare to assail that which the Lord Jehovah has appointed! It was God who devised the plan! It was God who gave His Son out of His own bosom to die! It is God, Himself, who has commended that plan to our hearts and made us put our trust in His great Sacrifice! Oh, it brings the tears into our eyes and the blood into our cheeks, that any should trample on the precious blood and speak ill of the vicarious sufferings of Christ!

Whoever the men may be, yes, though they were angels from Heaven, we could not have patience with them! We cannot help

regarding those as worse than carrion crows who would desire to touch this most sublime, though simplest of all doctrines–that Jesus Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree. They dare to say that it is immoral to suppose that our sin could be transferred to Christ, or His righteousness to us! Thus, to charge the essential act of Grace with immorality is to profane the Sacrifice of God and count the blood of Jesus an unholy thing! It is not for us to speak sweetly of those who deal so with Christ. If they are enemies of Christ, our Sacrifice, they cannot be friends of ours! We shake the dust from our feet against those who reject the doctrine of a Crucified Savior, slain in the sinner's place. They are no brethren of ours who reject the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! We are anxious to drive off those who peck at our Lord's Substitutionary Sacrifice, because that Sacrifice is of Divine appointment.

Next, we see a further reason for guarding the Sacrifice in the fact that it is of most solemn import. That sacrifice was so to Abram. It meant, you know, a covenant. The sacrifice, as Abram had presented it at God's appointing, was the token of his being brought into covenant relationship with God. Now, to my mind, it is one of the most delightful Truths of Scripture, though so much neglected, that God's people are in covenant with God, by a Covenant of Grace. An old Scotch theologian was known to say that he who understood the two Covenants, understood the whole science of

theology–and I believe it is so. The very pith of the whole business lies in that broken Covenant of Works by which we are ruined–and in that Everlasting Covenant of Grace, ordered in all things and sure–by which we are saved. The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is the "blood of the Everlasting Covenant," even as He says to us at the communion table, "This cup is the new Covenant in My blood." If you take His Sacrifice away, of course you take the Covenant away. Those who deny the vicarious Sacrifice have no faith in the Covenant–in fact, they never speak of such a thing, but place it among the obsolete terms which their forefathers used, but which they, themselves, have altogether renounced.

The Covenant is gone from their teaching and when that is gone, my Brothers and Sisters, what is left? If the Covenant is forgotten, what remains to be our support when, like David, we come to our dying beds? Alas for us if we cannot then exclaim, "Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure"! We cannot let the vultures tear this Sacrifice, for it is to us the token of the Covenant–and if there is no Covenant of Grace, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain–and we are still under the curse of the broken Law. If you are still out of covenant with God, what hope, what safety, what peace, what joy is there for you? Away, you kites, who are hovering over the Sacrifice with evil intent! You may

pretend to be harmless as doves, but we cannot allow you to profane the Covenant and peck at the Sacrifice.

And next, we must guard this Sacrifice because there God most fully displays His Grace. It was at the place of the sacrifice which Abram had offered, that God was pleased to come and reveal Himself to the Patriarch as He had not done before. “And it came to pass that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between those pieces. In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram.” The place of sacrifice is the place of Revelation. Where the blood is shed, there Grace is manifested! If you would see God in the wilderness, you must go to the place where the sacrifices were offered, for the place of sacrifice was the place where God met His people. The Mercy Seat, where God displayed His Grace to men, was sprinkled with blood. It must always be so. God cannot meet with sinful men except in Him who is the one Mediator between God and man, whose Sacrifice has reconciled us unto Himself. “Without shedding of blood there is no remission” and without remission there is no fellowship. Therefore, as we love the mercy of God, we must contend for the Sacrifice of Christ, and we must not bear that it should be ignored, much less that it should be decried.

True religion is gone when the vicarious work of Jesus is questioned. In the forefront of all preaching must be the Cross. “In this sign we conquer,” as Constantine saw in his dream. There is no

conquest over human hearts except by the story of the death of Jesus for the sins of men. Deprive us of the Sacrifice and behold an army which has lost both its banners and its weapons of war! The gates of hope are closed against the guilty when the Atonement is denied. The windows through which light should come to the penitent are sealed against a single beam of hope when once you take away the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore will we drive away the ravenous birds as long as we have a hand to move. As we love the souls of men, we will spend our last breath in the defense of our Lord's Substitution. Can we bear to see man's last refuge taken away? God forbid! Away, you evil birds! The heroes of old chased the harpies from their feasts–much more would we drive you from the altar of our God!

We will do this all the more because, as I have said to you before, this is the chief point of attack. Every doctrine of Revelation has been assailed, but the order of battle passed by the black prince at this hour runs as follows–"Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the Crucified King of Israel." If they can carry the bastion of Substitution. If they can throw down the great Truth of Atonement, then all the rest will go as a matter of course. The Cross taken away? Indeed, there is nothing left worth defending! If the Ark of the Lord is taken, what remains to Israel? Write Ichabod, for the glory has departed! Therefore let us gather up our strength,

that we may vigorously chase the vultures from the altar of the living God.

"How are we to do it?" one asks. Well, we can, all of us, help in this struggle. First, by a constant immovable faith in Jesus Christ our crucified Savior for ourselves. Oh, rest in Him, my Beloved! Rest more in His great Sacrifice every day–rest more intelligently, more happily, more implicitly in that finished work of His which He has worked out for all His people. Looking unto Jesus; coming unto Jesus; resting in Jesus; following Jesus–let that be a complete description of your lives! Every day let your own heart be more united to the well-beloved Bridegroom. Love Him best of all as you see Him arrayed in wounds and bloody sweat. Are not these His choicest ornaments? I am sure your hearts are never so stirred with holy feeling as when you dwell at Calvary and behold the Surety of the Covenant dying for you! Think more and more of Him who loved you to the death and thereby redeemed you from the death which your own sins deserved! Sing a grave, sweet melody–

"The ever-blessed Son of God
Went up to Calvary for me!
There paid my debt, there bore my load
In His own body on the tree."

Let your own confidence be strong and then very frequently make an open declaration of your faith in the atoning Sacrifice. I say

“very frequently,” for I think the oblation of our confession of Christ should be presented continually in these days. The more frequently we bring forward the Truth of the Atonement the better, when so many are covering it, quibbling at it, or contradicting it. Many of our Non-Conformist Churches are accustomed to have communion once a month and think that quite often enough–it may be so–but we delight to bring before the eyes of men on every first day of the week, the tokens of the Redeemer’s Sacrifice. The tokens are not objects of superstitious reverence to us, but yet they are very dear, as sweetly reminding us of His body broken for our sake–and His blood poured forth for our redemption. As long as that ordinance is observed, there will be a memorial of Christ’s death of the most instructive and impressive kind.

But whether you can use the emblems or not, declare the Truth, itself. Let your conversation be full of Christ Crucified and if there is any question anywhere about this matter, take your stand and let all know that you have seen that Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world! On this point there can be no difference among really regenerate men! This is one of the dividers of the chaff from the wheat. This great magnet will not draw to itself any but the metal which is akin to itself! Take care that there is no hesitancy about this Truth of God. When the birds come down upon the Sacrifice, let your childlike faith in Christ–and your clear statement of the Truth about Him–help to drive them away! Those

who are not in love with the doctrine will not long court your company. To some of us it is felt to be a duty to make as bold a defense as we can of this imperishable Truth of God and we would, if we knew of still plainer words, use them constantly.

"God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Stand fast, each man in his place, in the defense of this central Truth of our most blessed faith. And be prepared, for the sake of this, to endure all things from the adversary. Abram was an old man. A vulture–and especially a dozen vultures eager for their prey–are not easy to deal with. They are very ugly customers–they show no respect for the sacrifice–and certainly not for those who would prevent them from dishonoring the sacrifice. Angry and resolute, and free from every principle of reverence, nothing is finer play to them than to tear the great Sacrifice of God! If we come in their way, they will aim at our eyes and tear our faces and hands. Let them come on–we are prepared for their worst onslaughts! Be ready to endure anything for the sake of the doctrine of a Crucified Savior made sin for us though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him–made a curse for us, as it is written–"Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree."

The day shall come when he shall count himself most blessed who died for Christ and earned the ruby crown of those and all

else, so that we may stand forth unquestionably clear upon this glorious Truth of God, this article by which a Church stands or falls! As Churches receive it, they stand! As they reject it, they are outside the pale of the true household of faith. “When the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away.” To this work let us give ourselves till the sun goes down and we fall asleep to behold the vision of God!

II. But now, coming, perhaps, closer home to some of you, let us apply this example of Abram to ourselves in the matter of THE GRATEFUL SACRIFICE OF OUR LIVES. It is our reasonable service that we present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God by our Lord Jesus Christ–and we must guard our consecration against the temptations which will assail it.

I am addressing tonight many of you who feel that you have entered into covenant with God by Jesus Christ. You are henceforth and forever Jehovah’s covenanted ones and, in consequence of that covenant, through the Sacrifice of Christ, you have become the Lord’s. Remember last Sunday night the text which finished, “And you became Mine”? There was a sweet ring about those words to my ears, “You became Mine.” “You are not your own, you are bought with a price.” You know the sneer about the “mercantile Atonement,” but oh, I love the word, “bought,” and, as if to make it more mercantile, still, the Holy Spirit has worded it even more plainly, “bought with a price.” We take all those reproaches about

the mercantile theory into our bosom and hide them there as greater riches than the treasures of philosophy! We are not ashamed of the Words of God, Himself. And now, Beloved, we confess that we belong wholly to Christ, from the crown of our head to the sole of our feet–body, soul and spirit, time, talent, thought, substance–all that we are and all that we have! We have been "bought with a price" and, therefore, we put in no claim to ourselves, for we belong absolutely to the Lord that bought us!

Now, now the vultures will come! The carrion crows and kites will from afar behold this sacrifice and they will hasten to the prey. You do not see them tonight, perhaps. No, but the traveler does not see these evil fowls till, all of a sudden the sky seems dark with them! The horrid, hideous creatures come like lightning for rapidity, and they are hungry as death when they arrive on the scene! You that are consecrated to God may expect that though you do not see them, there are vultures looking down upon the sacrifice–and you must be prepared to drive them away.

"What sort of vultures will there be?" asks one. Well, there will come doubts as to eternal things. There will be questions about your own wisdom in giving yourself up to God. I hope you have been strangers to such birds of prey, but some of us have not been–doubts as to whether there is a God to serve; doubts as to whether there is a Heaven, an eternal future, a blessed reward–doubts as to whether it is well to give up this world for the next, or not. Drive

them away, Brothers and Sisters! Drive them away! When the birds come down upon the sacrifice, drive them away, as he did who had all the riches of Egypt offered to him, yet, “endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.” This is what you and I must do–feel that it is but commonsense, sanctified commonsense, to be looking out for that which will endure forever–and to let these temporary things go, if it is necessary that they go–that we may win the crown that fades not away!

Possibly there will come to some of you younger folks fond dreams of ambition. Now you are content to be a Christian and satisfied to mix with poor people in holy service. You are quite pleased at an opportunity of teaching in a Ragged School. Ah, but there may come a moment when Satan will show you the kingdoms of this world and he will say, “All these will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” And you may feel as if the service of Christ was not, after all, very respectable. That you could do better in the world. Find choicer company, enter more select society. But drive, drive these carrion crows away my Brothers and Sisters–there cannot be anything comparable in the world to the service of God–there cannot be anything so worthy of your noblest manhood as to be truly the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ! When these fowls come down upon the sacrifice, drive them away!

Another wretched sort of black crows, however, assails men more frequently. They come in the form of the cares of life–the care of

getting bread, the hardness of labor. Many a man has said, “Well now, I have many children and I work hard. And I am poor. Surely I must not seek, first, the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.” And straightway he begins to neglect the assembling of himself together with God’s people. And then he thinks that he must spend a part of the Sabbath in labor. And times that he used to spend in prayer are given up to meaner employment. But oh, if ever a man ought to cling to Christ more than at any other time, it is when he is poor! You that are burdened with cares, you are the people who need Christ most of all! If a man lived in a palace and had no Christ to go to, I would call him a miserable being. But if you have to toil without the comforts of this life, so much the more reason that you should enjoy those eternal compensations which can help you to bear up in your struggle. Oh, let not, I pray you, the cares of this life take you from Christ! Live for Him! You cannot live without Him–do not try it! The heavier your difficulties, the more Grace you need. Cling all the more closely to your Lord when troubles come. When the birds come down upon the sacrifice–those carking cares, wearinesses and troubles of life–drive them away!

Perhaps I may be speaking to certain consecrated men and women who have met with other horridly filthy fowls. Of course, you never saw vultures in their native state. If you did see them once, you would never want to see them again–they are such loathsome creatures. But there will come to godly men, sometimes,

temptations to sin. The purest have been tempted to impurity. The most devout have been tempted to blaspheme. Men full of integrity have been tempted to dishonesty and the most truthful to falsehood. We cannot tell what we may be tempted to do. But here is our one business with these vultures–let as drive them away! You cannot help birds flying over your heads in the air, but do not let them alight and build their nests in your hair! Temptations will come, but do not entertain them. Drive them away! Give the vultures the quarter-staff–make these horrible creatures feel that you cannot and will not permit them to take up a lodging anywhere near you! Abram drove them away. He would have no parley with them. He threw his staff at them, shouted at them, struck at them and drove them away. God help us to do so with every foul temptation!

But there is a nasty, sleepy kind of vulture, called idleness–one of the vultures that sit and sleep by the hour together–and I think I have seen them around here, sometimes. This vulture comes to some good men who say they belong to Christ, but that question we must leave to their own consciences. It is a sleepy vulture and they say, “we think we have labored long enough.” They used to be in the Sunday school when they were younger, but they are now weary of such constant toil. They used to be very earnest in the front rank, but now their position seems to be to sit in an arm-chair and watch the battle and see how other people fight. I have been slenderly cheered, lately, by a large number of Brothers and Sisters

who have greatly sympathized with me–and helped me to fight the Lord's battles by bravely looking on.

They remind me of Mr. Gough's story of Betty and the bear. She beat the bear with her broom with all her might–and her brave husband, who had climbed a ladder into the loft–helped her grandly by bidding her hit the bear harder and harder, while he looked on! I hope I may yet receive worthier help than this! Let us all be up and doing and take our full share of the warfare. I exhort you, if the vulture of indolence comes your way, to drive it away! A nasty, dirty creature it is, after all, if it makes a man of God who is capable of Christian service to a high degree, sit still, fold his arms, and say, "There is nothing more for me to do."

One vulture, too, that wants to be driven away, is that of measuring yourselves with other people. Some judge that they do all that is expected of them if they copy other people. Their guinea is always put underneath somebody else's guinea. If they gave 10, it would not be too much for them. But still, they are satisfied as long as they do as well as other people. Let us get out of this! If we are only going to be what other people are, we shall run great risks of being unprofitable servants. "Comparing themselves among themselves," says the Apostle, "they are not wise." I will neither stand in another man's shoes at the Day of Judgment, nor tonight, for, though I very frequently feel as though I were surer of any other man's salvation than my own, yet at no time would I dare to

run the risk of changing with anyone, for I do know something about myself, but I know nothing of any other man's heart! Let no one make another man his measure and standard! I pray you not to do so, for if you do, it will be a vulture that will defile your sacrifice.

The man who can live most completely to God shall be the happiest man even in this life. He whose heart's desire is only to spend and be spent for Christ shall find that he will win a peaceful state of heart–and this is a foreshadowing of Heaven. I mean not that we should seek to win this poor and paltry world, which God has purposely put under our feet, but I mean that the meek "inherit the earth" in the highest and truest sense. He shall have the most of real happiness who is willing to lose happiness and lose everything so that he may win Christ and be found in Him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the Law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith. Therefore, when any of the ravenous fowls of evil come down upon your life's sacrifice, drive them away!

III. And so I must close with only a few sentences upon this last point–GUARD ALL THE SACRIFICES OF YOUR DEVOTION. When the fowls come down upon your sacrifices of prayer, praise and meditation, drive them away! Have you noticed that if all day long there is not a knock at the door, there will be one if you retire to pray? It is wise to do as the Savior says, "Enter into your closet and when you have shut the door, pray to your Father that sees in

secret." That shutting of the door means that we are to seek secrecy and to prevent interruption. A little boy, who was accustomed to spend time every day in prayer, went up into a hayloft and when he climbed into the hayloft, he always pulled the ladder up after him. Someone asked him why he did so. He answered, "As there is no door, I pull up the ladder."

Oh, that we could always, in some way, cut the connection between our soul and the intruding things which lurk below! There is a story told of me and of some person, I never knew who it was, who desired to see me on a Saturday night when I had shut myself up to make ready for the Sabbath. He was very great and important and so the maid came to say that someone desired to see me. I bade her say that it was my rule to see no one at that time. Then he was more important and impressive, still, and said, "Tell Mr. Spurgeon that a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ desires to see him immediately." The frightened servant brought the message but the sender gained little by it, for my answer was, "Tell him I am busy with his Master and cannot see servants now." Sometimes you must use strong measures. Did not our Lord tell His messengers, on one occasion, to salute no man on the way? Courtesy must give place to devotion! It is incumbent on you that you should be alone with your Lord–and if intruders force an entrance–they must be sent about their business.

Alas, if you send men and women away, evil birds will still not be so dismissed. Wandering thoughts and inward troubles–how shall these be chased away? That door must be well shut which keeps the devil out. He comes in at the smallest opening, for he is a serpent, and serpents get in where other creatures cannot. They have a wriggling way with them. Satan will twist himself into us when we hope we are beyond his reach. Drive him away, Brothers and Sisters! He will go if you resist him. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." He will not stand fire if you are determined to have a shot at him. As to vain thoughts which harass and distract you, seriously determine that you will drive them away. All your thoughts of sorrow, dismiss them at the Mercy Seat. As for all business thoughts, do not entertain them. Say what Abraham said to the servants, "Abide here while I go and worship God yonder." Tell the world, "So far may you come, but no farther–I must, I will keep my sacrifice of praise and prayer before the Lord."

Sir Thomas Abney had been accustomed to have family prayer at a certain time. He was made Lord Mayor of London. His hour of family prayer being sometime about the time of the banquet, he begged to be excused for a little, for he had an urgent engagement with a special Friend. He then went and called his family together to meet with God in prayer. Do the same if even a banquet should come down upon you–quit the table for the altar–and your guests for your God. When our time for prayer draws near, if all the 12

Apostles were to preach in our street, we ought not to give up our private prayer for the sake of hearing them all! When the birds come down upon the sacrifice, drive them away, however fine they may look! Drive off the golden eagles as well as the crows. This will require great watchfulness. Cast yourselves upon the power of the Holy Spirit. Only He can help us with our infirmities–much more with our distractions. Let us cry to Him, that His Divine overshadowing may be both shield and great reward to us while we attempt to draw near to God in private worship!

Now, my dear Hearers, I will keep you no longer except to say this–those of you who came here tonight to hear the Word, I pray you do not go away without a blessing. Something or other has happened, perhaps, to distract you–drive it away! The Sacrifice of Christ is the thing you have to look to. Look unto the Lord Jesus and be saved! And if anything comes between you and His atoning death, drive it away! Come to Jesus! Why should it not be? It is the last time the preacher will be here on Thursday nights for a little while. Did he not ask for a closing and crowning blessing? It will be realized to the fullest if you are saved tonight! You can be saved. You shall be saved if you look to Jesus, the great Sin Offering! Give yourselves up to the Savior now, upon the spot.

You that have believed in Jesus unto eternal life and have just begun the Divine life, it will not be long before you are beset with various temptations. Be prepared for those fowls, whose chief is

the prince of the power of the air, and labor to drive them away! You think that since you are converted, it will be all plain sailing now. You make a mistake–it is now that the battle begins! Be prepared for conflict. I have no doubt Abram, being a sheik, carried a good staff with him. Be ready with a staff, borrowed from the good Shepherd, to drive away the temptations that are sure to assail young Believers!

As for you dear old saints, you have offered your sacrifice and it is towards evening. The sun is going down–do not be surprised if you should feel a horror of great darkness, even at the last–but rest assured that the Lord will come and cheer your darkness with the vision of His Covenant Love. Drive those doubts away and those fears of death! You are going Home! Do not be afraid. Jesus is coming to meet you, therefore dismiss every fear! Stand by the sacrifice all day! Stand by the sacrifice when night comes on, birds or no birds! Stand by the sacrifice whether you see a vision of Glory or not. Stand by the sacrifice till you behold the Lamb on His Throne! One thing I have made up my mind to, whether I find present joy or present sorrow, present commendation or present censure–I will be faithful to my Lord and stand by the sacrifice until I die with one hand upon this Book, and another upon the horns of the altar! I would cry this night in the courts of the Lord's House, in the presence of all His people, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the altar." I will be a sacrifice for Jesus

because He is a Sacrifice for me! I count it all joy to preach Him and His Cross if I may but win souls and be found in Him at the last. The Lord bless you and be with you, my Brothers and Sisters, for Christ's sake! PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON–Genesis 15.HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"–377, 670, 879.TO THE CHURCH AT THE TABERNACLE:BELOVED FRIENDS–I write you because my heart prompts me to do so and because many of you desire it. We have not been in hearty union for so many years without feeling a living interest in each other. This should be more largely the fruit of Church membership than it usually is. The idea of real brotherhood should be more tenderly and more practically realized. Let us, each one, labor after it and take a deep personal interest in our fellow members, especially in those who are poor, or ill, or young, or despondent, or under peculiar temptations and afflictions. Thus should we make up among ourselves a sort of mutual pastorate and should each gain as well as bestow a blessing.

Because there is so much of this brotherly concern among you, I feel peace of heart while absent. But because there is not more of it, I would stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. We are all the children of one Father and redeemed with the precious blood of the same Savior. Let us, therefore, feel a natural instinct of unity and, from the force of the inner life, cleave to each other in love. We are likely to need more and more of that strength which comes

from perfect unity of heart. Attacks will be made upon us by the forces of error and we must stand shoulder to shoulder, or rather heart to heart, in the hour of conflict. May the Lord Himself, by His Holy Spirit, enable us to do so!

My release from public service was greatly needed, for I have felt great prostration since last I wrote you. By your loving prayers I shall be strengthened and enabled to use my rest for laying in new stores for future use. How much I desire that when I am again among you it may be in the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Peace! I desire to be remembered to each one as truly as if I could grasp every hand and say, "God bless you," to each individual.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

November 17, 1887.

SPURGEON. P.S.–So far as this letter applies to all my readers, it is for them–assuredly I include them all in every word of Christian affection, for it is to this larger Church that I owe so much of substantial help in the various Christian enterprises committed to my charge.

Ge 15:16 • Filling Up the Measure of Iniquity

SERMON 3043

F*illing Up The Measure Of Iniquity*

"The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."

Genesis 15:16

THE Amorites had indulged in the most degrading sin. God had observed this, but He did not at once execute vengeance upon them. He had determined that, as a nation, they should be destroyed and rooted out from under Heaven and that their land should be given to the seed of Abraham. But He tells Abraham that his seed must wait for it, for as yet the Amorites had not filled up the measure of their iniquity. It would take more than 400 years, during which time God's patience would wait while the Amorites continued to heap sin upon sin, iniquity upon iniquity, until they

reached a certain point–and then God would bear with them no longer. When the Lord uttered the words of our text, the Amorites had not come up to that fatal point and, therefore, He did not at once mete out their punishment to them, for the measure of iniquity was not yet full.

It is a well-known Truth of God that God has great long-suffering, but that there is a point beyond which even His long-suffering will not go. It has been so in the great judgments of God in the world. Before the days of Noah, men had revolted from God, but Noah was sent to them as a preacher of righteousness. And he did preach and the Spirit of God was with him. Yet, for all that, the antediluvian world turned not from its sin and when the 120 years had expired–but not till then–God opened the windows of Heaven and down came the deluge which destroyed the whole race with the exception of the eight souls who were preserved in the ark. Those old-world sinners had had 120 years for repentance, and 120 years of earnest, faithful warning from holy Noah–and not till all those year's had expired did God's patience come to an end and His judgments begin.

Remember also the case of the children of Israel in the wilderness. They were a rebellious people–constantly revolting, often murmuring–at one time setting up a golden calf in the place of the one living and true God–yet the Lord had long patience with them. His anger did sometimes wax hot against them, but Moses

came in between them as a mediator and God postponed the punishment of His wayward people. But at last it seemed as though He could bear withthem no longer, so He swore in His wrath, “They shall not enter into My rest”–and their carcasses fell in the wilderness till the track of Israel through the desert could be marked by the graves of the unbelieving nation–and there were funerals every day. It was this sad fact that caused Moses so mournfully to sing, in the 90 th Psalm, “You carry them awayas with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which grows up. In the morning it flourishes, and grows up; in the evening it is cut down, and withers. For we are consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath are we troubled. You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your Countenance. For all our days are passed away in Your wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they are fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knows the power of Your anger? Even according to Your fear, so is Your wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Return, O Lord, how long? And let it repent You concerning Your servants. O satisfy us early with Your mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein You have afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen

evil." Not a man of all that generation, save only Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, was permitted to enter the promised land!

You will also at once call to mind the history of the two nations of Israel and Judah in later years. They exceedingly provoked the Lord and their land was, therefore, invaded by their enemies–and many of the people and their rulers were carried into captivity. But God did not cast off His people, nor expatriate them from their highly-favored land till, by degrees, they had reached the climax of rebellion and idolatry. Then He delivered the chosen nations into the hands of their cruel adversaries. Israel was swept clean as a man's threshing floor when he has purged it. And as for the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, they ceased to dwell by the vine-covered hills of their own dear land, for they were carried away into captivity by the rivers of Babylon where they wept when they remembered Zion. God is indeed long-suffering, but there is an end, even to His long-suffering! The Jews in our Lord's day, and especially the scribes and Pharisees, were so obstinate and perverse that, at last, our Savior said to them, "Fill you up, then, the measure of your fathers." He had borne long with them and He still pleaded with them and wept over them–but at last, the nation as a nation, was given up to blindness and hardness of heart! The beautiful city of Jerusalem was destroyed and not one stone of the Temple was left upon another.

I might, if it were necessary, say that a similar experience has befallen all the great nations of the earth, for all of them have been greatly sinful. The crimes of the Assyrian king and people brought that mighty empire to an inglorious end. Babylon sank, not so much beneath the power of the Medes and Persians as beneath the sins of Belshazzar and his blasphemous princes and lords and ladies! And the Persian Empire, in its turn, passed not away because of Alexander's valor so much as because the Medes and Persians were corrupt in the sight of the Lord. So was it with Greece–her idolatries and her filthinesses brought upon her the ruin which makes her at once the admiration of all lands for her artistic beauty and the detestation of all lands for her festering corruption and iniquity. As for the Roman Empire–who that reads the history of her rise and fall but knows that long before the city of Rome began to crumble and decay, her virtue had departed, her ancient valor had declined, licentiousness had reached an awful pitch–and then the Word of the Lord went forth that the iniquitous empire should be swept away? I might give modern instances of the working of the same Law, but I shall not. Certain is it that God has long patience with the various nations and tribes of men that keep on sinning against Him, but at last He utters that mysterious prophetic sentence (Isa 34:5), "My sword shall be bathed in Heaven." And then woe be unto the men or the nations whom He

smites, “for it is the day of the Lord’s vengeance, and the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion.”

When we speak of this great Law of God as it operates on a large scale among nations, many will admit the truth of it, but they are not so willing to admit the truth of it so far as it concerns themselves. I intend, therefore, to confine myself in this discourse to the great principle of my text as it can be applied to individuals. There is a fullness of the iniquity of every individual sinner in these days, just as there was a fullness of the iniquity of the Amorites in ancienttimes. And I will try to prove to you, first, that there is a time when the measure of a sinner’s iniquity is not yet full.Secondly , that the measure of his iniquity is constantly being filled. AndI want you all solemnly and seriously to consider the question –What will happen then?

First, then, THERE IS A TIME WHEN THE MEASURE OF A SINNER’S INIQUITY IS NOT YET FULL.

There is a measure for all iniquity and every iniquity is put into that measure. Flatter not yourself, Sinner, with the false and foolish notion that your sin is forgotten. You may possibly forget it, but God never forgets. You may keep no record of your transgressions, but God’s recording angel does not fail to write in His Book of Remembrance, and to engrave them as “with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever,” as Job said concerning the preservation of his own words. All those sins of yours–the sins of your youth and of

your manhood–are registered in God's Book. You shut your eyes, and–like the ostrich that has buried his head in the sand and, therefore, thinks itself secure because it cannot see the danger that threatens it–you delude yourself with the notion that because you have forgotten your sins, they have ceased to be, but it is not so! Though you should seek to hide your sins in a cleft among the snow on the top of the Himalayas, Jehovah would speedily bring them down from those lofty heights! And though you should attempt to bury them in the depths of the Atlantic, God would bring them up from the lowest ocean bed! Sin is an everlasting thing–unless it is put away by God, Himself, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake–no grave in the world can hide it. No earthly sepulcher can conceal it from the all-seeing eyes of Jehovah. If buried for a while, there will be a resurrection of sin as well as of sinners–and what a dread procession of sin, iniquity, unrighteousness and transgression shall slowly march before your newly-awakened eyes, O unrepentant and unforgiven sinner, when your iniquities shall rise up in judgment against you to condemn you!

Thus I have reminded you that there is a measure for all iniquity, but, happily, that measure is not yet full. That wasa very remarkable vision that was seen by the Prophet Zechariah, "a woman that sits in the midst of the ephah." And the angel said, "This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the Ephah," so that evidently the measure had not been full. And it is still true that

there is a time when a sinner's measure of iniquity is "not yet full." Let me, however, also remind you it is only God's infinite mercy that permits a sinner to continue to live after he has committed even one sin. There is no reason why, upon the basis of Infallible Justice, a man should be allowed to sin up to a certain point. A single sin is the transgression of the Law of God–it is high treason against "the King eternal, immortal, invisible," and deserves to be punished. However much or however little we may have sinned, "every transgression and disobedience" ought to receive "a just recompense of reward," as in the days of which Paul wrote to the Hebrews. Apart from the Atoning Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is not one sinner living in the whole world who could stand before God! It is not justice, but boundless compassion and infinite pity which put a measure to man's iniquity and allows him to live on until he has reached that point–for sin is worthy of death in every case, and in any degree–so says the Word of the Lord.

I must also remark that when we say that some sinners have not filled their measure of iniquity, it must not beimagined that the same measure of sin is to be filled up by every sinner. man has filled his own measure, be it a large one or a small one, then will God come to him in His wrath and punish him in His hot displeasure. Some great offenders like Pharaoh and Judas fill up a huge measure of transgression–some others, cut off in their earlier days, spend a hot and hasty manhood in sin and go to their doom

before they have committed any notorious offenses against mankind in general. The measures differ in size, but still in each case it gets filled sooner or later. And then, woe, woe, woe unto the man whose measure of iniquity is full! It is through God's long-suffering that we are able to tell you this solemn Truth. I have reminded you already that if it were not for His long-suffering patience, there would not be such a point for sinners to reach, but their first sin would the crushing, final, fatal blow from the hand of Divine Justice! It is God's long-suffering that gives men space for repentance, that presents to them, under the Gospel dispensation, the proclamations of mercy that plead with them to turn from their sins and to lay hold on Eternal Life.

Because of this, does anymore here wickedly say that as his particular measure is not yet full, he may still go on in sin? Ah, my Friend, you know not how small your measure may be, nor how soon it may be full! But suppose it is a great measure which is to be filled by you? Then the longer it is in getting filled, the heavier it will be when it is filled and the more terrible will be your eternal doom! Little comfort can any man ever derive from the fact that he is permitted to live long in sin, for he will have to endure forever the heavier punishment for the greater measure of guilt. Beware, beware, beware, you who would draw the wrong kind of consolation from the subject we are now considering, for there is no consolation in it for the willfully wicked–only sorrow, fear and

trembling of heart! Here we sit or stand together in this House of Prayer–some of us saved by the Sovereign Grace of God and others, sitting side by side with us, only here because the measure of their iniquity is not yet full! Here is one who is 40 years of age, but his measure is not yet full–he shall live another year. Over there is one who is 60 years of age, but his measure of iniquity is not yet full–he shall yet see another decade of years. Yonder is one who is 70 and even his measure is not yet full, but it soon will be! Ah, and how short is the span of human life even when it is longest! And as I have already said, the heavier the sinner's measure that takes so long to get filled, the more overwhelming shall be the punishment that shall be meted out to such a sinner in the Great Day of account.

When I have such a solemn theme as this, my words cannot flow freely from my lips. I wish that I could speak out the inmost emotions of my heart without even using my tongue, for my words fail to convey to you what I feel in the deepest recesses of my being. O impenitent Sinner, it is so sad to think that you are only sitting here because the measure of your iniquity is not yet full! If there were half-a-dozen persons together in a room and one of them was only there because the hour fixed for his execution had not yet come, I think that you would not take any particular interest in the other five individuals, whoever they might be, but all your thoughts would center upon that one man of whom you would say to yourself, sadly and sorrowfully, "He has been judged according to

the law of the land. The death-sentence has been pronounced upon him and he is only spared because the clock has not yet struck and the bell has not yet tolled for him to go out to execution." You unbelievers are, according to God's Word, "condemned already" because you have "not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." Christians, do you know that such condemned persons are here and have you no heart of compassion for them? Children of God, do you know that some of your own sons and daughters are in this terrible position and yet have you no tears to shed on their account? O Preacher, can you stand here and talk so coldly upon such a theme as this when words of flame would be all too cold to express the horror that should fill your soul in view of such an assembly as this? Oh, that we had more tender hearts! For then should we more deeply pity those poor sinning souls whose iniquity is not yes full!

II. With a heavy heart I must turn to my second point, which is that IN THE CASE OF EVERY UNCONVERTED SINNER, THE MEASURE OF HIS INIQUITY IS CONSTANTLY BEING FILLED.

Every sin that he commits helps to fill up the measure of his iniquity and there is nothing that he can do without sin being mixed with it. Solomon says that "the plowing of the wicked is sin." That is to say even his common actions, in performing the ordinary avocations of his daily life, bring sin upon him! Solomon also said,

“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord,” so that even when he pretends to do that which is right in the case of a Christian, he is still heaping up sin, filling up the measure of his iniquity!

There are some persons who fill up their measure very quickly– wanton, dissolute, depraved sinners, they seem as if they could not heap up iniquity fast enough! They are so greedy that with both hands they labor to fill up the measure. They run, as Peter says, “to the excess with body and with the soul apparently determined to go post haste toHell. And if anything can be found by which they can quicken their speed to destruction, they seek it out and seem to prize it. Is it not strange that it should be so? Yet, in London, and I suppose it is the same elsewhere, anyone who walks along the streets for a little while will soon see evidences of the fact that there are many persons to whom the usual methods of going to destruction seem to be all too slow. I trust that if there are any young men here who are thus rapidly filling up their measure of iniquity, they will stop and think. My Friend, your candle will burn fast enough without your lighting it at both ends! You will ruin yourself fast enough without needing to heap up sin upon sin by becoming a drunkard and a gambler as well as profane and unchaste! O man, why are you so diligent to be your own destroyer?–

“Sinner, oh why so thoughtless grown?

Why in such dreadful haste to die?
Daring to leap to worlds unknown,
Heedless against your God to fly."

Perhaps among the sins that fill up a man's measure very quickly, one of the chief is persecution of God's people. Aman will bear many insults and even much injury to himself, but if you touch his children, then the color comes into his face and he is swift to avenge the wrong that has been done to them. So is it in the case of God's children and their Father! He said to Zion in Babylon, "He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye." If you want to be damned out of hand, become a persecutor of the saints, for that is the quickest way to Hell! When holy Wishart was chained to the stake, he pointed to the cardinal who was gloating over the spectacle and told him that God's wrath would shortly fall upon him–and so it came to pass, for God avenges His own elect–and sometimes does it very speedily. The sin of persecuting the Church of God is one which, perhaps more than any other, helps to fill up the measure of a sinner's iniquity!

Another sin of a similar character is that of attending Gospel ordinances and yet despising them. The Lord will dealmore leniently with those who are ignorant of the Gospel and have no opportunity of hearing it, than He will deal with you to whom the Gospel has long been familiar as a household word, yet in whom familiarity with it has only bred contempt. Christ has been

knocking at the door of some of your hearts for many years. I can personally bear witness that the message of salvation has come to you in many forms and various ways. I have searched the Word of God with the view of finding the most impressive texts–and I have prayed to God to guide me to subjects which might savingly affect you. These topics have often affected my own heart while I have been preparing for the pulpit, yet, so far they have not affected your hearts–or at least not sufficiently to lead you to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Depend upon it, you sermonhearers are bringing a curse upon yourselves by despising and refusing the blessing which has so long been made known to you in vain! God may well say, "I will not always send My servant to preach to those who judge themselves unworthy of Everlasting Life. Why should I cast my Gospel pearls before such swinish creatures? Why should I continue to call to those who will not heed My voice?" Well may He say, as He did of old, "Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out My hand and no man regarded; but you have set at naught all My counsel, and would none of My reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes." It is no small sin to have heard the Gospel and yet to they repented not–"Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes!

But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment, than for you."

It is another great help in filling up the measure of iniquity when a man has had serious personal affliction, yet it hasnot softened, but rather has hardened him. You, my Friend, were laid low a little while ago. Was it a malignant fever, or some other dangerous disease that you had? Your relatives said, "He cannot recover," and you turned your face to the wall, in the bitterness of your spirit, for you feared that you would die, and you knew that you were unprepared to meet your God. You were glad enough if somebody would pray with you then! And, after a fashion, you shuffled into some sort of prayer of your own and you promised what you would do if the Lord would spare your forfeited life . But whereare your good resolutions now? There are some of you who used to be Sabbath-breakers. And when you were likely to die, you said, "If God will but spare me, the shop shall be closed on His holy day." Yet you have opened it again though He spared you. You were a drunkard up to the time of your great illness, but you said, "If God will spare my life, I will never touch the intoxicating cup again." God did spare your life, yet you are as conspicuous a slave of drink as ever you were! And you have proved yourself to be a liar in the sight of God! Young man, you got into a sad trouble once, but God, by a very special Providential deliverance, helped you out of it and you then said, "I will walk more guardedly for the future." Yet you

have gone back to the same sin, as the dog turns to his own vomit, “and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.” But God will not waste His pains on you much longer. A farmer plows his field and if it brings forth no harvest, he may plow it again, but he will not always go on plowing a field that is as barren as a rock. [See Sermon #2977, Volume 52–PLOWING A ROCK– Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] A gardener may come to afig tree and if it bears no fruit, he may prune it and dig about it, and fertilize it, but he will not go on doing that year after year–he will at last say, “Cut it down; why cumbers it the ground?” And it must be so with you if you still remain impenitent after all God’s dealings with you! By refusing to heed God’s warning message which came to you in the chamber of affliction. By forgetting the gentle pressure of God’s hand of mercy which raised you up to health and strength again, you are helping to fill up the measure of your iniquity!

And let me further say that–and I know that my words will go home to some here –when a man has been subject toconvictions– whether those convictions may be set down to an alarmed conscience, or to what I may call the secondary operations of God’s Holy Spirit, I will not say–but, when a man has been the subject of convictions and has stifledthem, it greatly adds to the measure of his guilt. The other night a young man was in the street and a

temptation was set before him–and he knew it to be a temptation. He stood still a while and thought within himself, “I know that this is a wrong thing for me to do. It would break my mother’s heart if she knew that I committed this sin. And as for my father, I could never dare to look him in the face again if he knew that I had done this and, besides, I am an attendant at a place of worship and know that this is an evil thing–and that it might be my eternal ruin.” Now, after that young man had weighed the matter, if he had deliberately chosen to commit that sin, there would have been ten times the guilt in it than there might have been in the case of another who was overtaken unawares by sudden temptation and had no time to consider what was the right thing for him to do. In proportion to the violence that a man has to do to himself in order to commit a certain transgression, the measure of his guilt may be estimated.

I believe there are people here who, on many occasions, have sat and trembled at the Word of the Lord–and have been softened in spirit till they have wept in silence–and sometimes openly. And they have whispered to themselves ,“We will really seek the great change. We will cry to God for help that we may repent of sin and believe in Jesus, as the preacher urges us.” But on those steps outside they have met with some worldly companion and, while talking with him, all their good resolutions have melted away and the sinner who seemed to be impressed remains a sinner still! The one who appeared to be awakened a month ago is now a drunkard

and the conscience that was thought to be getting tender six months ago, is fast becoming as hard as the nether millstone! These are dreadful facts, but they all go to show that a man may be–even in the House of Prayer, and under the means of Grace–continually filling up the measure of his iniquity. These are terrible Truths of God for me to have to preach, but it is necessary for them to be told. May you all feel the force of them and may God thus drive you to seek shelter in His Son who died upon the Cross of Calvary, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

III. My third point is that THE MEASURE OF INIQUITY WILL ONE DAY BE FULL.

It will take time to fill it, but it will be filled in due time and, at the rate at which some men go in sinning, they will soon fill up the measure of their transgression. The tares are green and God will not have them cut down yet, for He lets even the tares ripen. He allows even the poisonous fruit of evil to hang on the tree till it grows mellow and then it drops with its own weight. But the tares will ripen and the evil fruit will become mellow–and then will their end come. And it will take time for you sinners to ripen in sin, but you will ripen, and then you will be shaken from the tree and this lifeshall know you no more.

I want you unconverted ones to think for a minute or two how nearly full your measure probably is even now. Beginwith your early childhood and think over your many acts of willful

disobedience and sin. I cannot trace your whole life, but let me remind you of your early manhood. Is there nothing for you to be ashamed of and nothing for you to repent of there? I am sure that there are some here who cannot think of that period of life without blushing for very shame. Then think of the later days of your riper manhood. O Sirs, what heaps of sin are there! The measure of your iniquity must be nearly full. Do not forget, too, that we are usually very bad judges of our real state in the sight of God. The probability is that the measure of our iniquity is a great deal more full than we think it is. I hope none of you were ever bankrupts, but if you ever were insolvent I expect that when you actually came to look into your books, you found that you were much more deeply in debt than you ever thought that you were! It is a common thing for men who are in an unsound state in their business to fancy that their position is better than a rigid examination proves it to be. And I believe it is so in spiritual things with many of you. Take care, take care! You suppose that only the bottom of the measure is full as yet, but the recording angel sees that your iniquity is nearly up to the top! It is a very mournful reflection, dear Friends, that there may be some here–and that there probably are some here–who have only to commit one more sin to fill up the measure of their iniquity! One more lie and the measure is full! One more lascivious song and it is full. One more act of theft, one more drunken bout and it is full! I have known some people come here–and perhaps

some such are now here–who have had delirium tremens! It is a wonder that they were not cast into Hell then–a marvel of mercy thatthey were spared a little longer! But, the next time that happens to you, Sir, it may be a delirium that will never have an end! The next time you put that poison cup to your lips and dare to drink till you are drunk, you will drink yourself into eternal damnation! O beware , beware, BEWARE! It is not merely a man who speaks thus to you–there is a warningVoice from Heaven which is speaking to some people here through my lips. Stop, Sir, for if you take only one step more you will be plunged in eternal ruin! Do you ask what concern it is of mine whether you are lost or saved? It is as much my concern as it would be if I could save your temporal life if I saw you in danger! Much more would I desire to point out to you the danger of your immortal soul that you may, by God's Infinite Grace, be saved from spiritual and everlasting ruin!

All this while there is one very sad but most true reflection that I must mention to you. It is this –while theunconverted are always putting more sin into the measure, it is not in their power to take out anything that is already in the measure. I can fill the ephah of my transgression, but I cannot empty it, and I cannot even diminish it. Somebody says to me, "Suppose, Sir, that I never sin again?" Well, what then? Even if you get no further into debt, that will not pay off the old score. "Then, Sir, what shall we do? Shall we stand here and weep over our sins–will not our tears wash them away?"

No, though you shed a Niagara of penitential tears, there is no power in them to blot out a single sin! “But what if we perform many good works?” No, though you could fill an Atlantic with your good works, you would not have washed out the crimson stain of even one of your innumerable transgressions! No, you cannot take one sin out of themeasure, though you can keep on putting in sin upon sin upon sin–and so the measure is being filled and it will soon be full.

IV. So I close by asking you–what then?

I was reading in the New Testament, the other night, and there were half-a-dozen words that impressed me with peculiar force. I think they are, on the whole, as dreadful as any words that were ever spoken. I may venture to say that even the Scripture, itself, contains no more terrible words than these which I am about to quote to you, yet they were spoken by the Lord Jesus, Himself–the loving, tender, gentle Jesus, who called the little children to Him. They are recorded in the 8 th verse. And then, as though one thunder-clap must follow another,they are repeated in the 24 th verse. These are the words–“You shall die in your sins."Hear them again–"If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins.” I heard of a man who died in a ditch, but that is nothing compared with dying in the ditch of your sins! I heard of one who fell down dead in the street, but what is that compared with dying in sin? Some die starved, but that is nothing to dying in sin! Near my

house, the other day, there was one who sat down to eat and some coals from a fire flew out and caught her clothes on fire–the people around her tore her clothes from her back, but she was so badly burnt that she died–but the flames of sin are worse than coals of the fire. “You shall die in your sins.” I have no choice as to how or where I shall die except in this one respect–that Imay never die in sin, with iniquity like the fabled poison shirt killing its unhappy wearer. He tried to tear it off and even tore away his flesh, but the poison burnt into his bones–but it is worse than that to die in sin! Man, you must die in your sins if you continue to live in them! You cannot escape from the consequence of sin if you keep following in the pursuit of sin. Work and you shall have your wages–and “the wages of sin is death.” Sow and you shall reap your harvest–and if you sow to the flesh, you must and shall of the flesh reap corruption! I pray God that none of you may ever know, in your own persons, the full meaning of those awful words of the Savior, “You shall die in your sins.” If youbelieve not–“YOU SHALL DIE IN YOUR SINS.”

But I cannot send you away like this, although yonder clock has struck the usual hour for closing the service. Thank God that no clock has struck to forbid me to proclaim the tidings of mercy as long as men are yet in this world. I told you that you could not take any sin out of that measure and most truly did I speak, but let me whisper in your ears that thereis One, the ever-blessed Son of God,

who can empty it! He can take the measure of your sin, just as it is, and not merely take out a little, but He can take it all and put it on His own shoulders and carry it right away, and hurl it into his own sepulcher where it shall be buried so deep that even the eyes of God, Himself, shall never see it again! "Oh, would to God," says one, "that He would do that with my sins!" Sir, He will do it with your sins, now, at this moment, if you believe on Him. "Believe on Him?" says one, "I believe that He is the Son of God and the Savior of men." Go further then, and trust Him as your own Savior. Give up your sins! Give up your self-reliance and cast yourself into those dear arms that were outstretched on the Cross that great sinners might be folded in them and find eternal shelter there–

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One.
There is life at this moment for you,"

if you will but look to Him! May God's gracious Spirit enable you to look away from self to His great substitutionary Sacrifice, to the full Atonement He made, to the utmost ransom that He paid! Close in with Christ and the measure of your iniquity shall be emptied!

But remember that if Christ is not received, there is no other hope of salvation. And what is more, after this night there may not even be another proclamation of the way of salvation for some of you. I do not know when I am more pained–when I have to go to visit young men who are dying, perhaps of consumption and without

hope. It is dreadful work to try to set forth the Gospel to them. I sometimes feel as if I must proclaim the Law, though they are so sick and weak. And, sometimes, the mother stands beside the bed and weeps, and says, "Ah, I have prayed for him many times, but, oh, that I knew that he was saved!" Then she says to me, on the stairs, "I could give him up, Sir, though I love the dear boy–I could give him up without a sigh, but, oh, it breaks my heart to think that he is dying without a Savior!" Yes, and every Christian ought to feel the same, in his measure, about every sinner! It is a trying thing to me, when I am walking in the street, to see an accident. I feel as if my heart were in my mouth at once. If I were in a railway accident and saw somebody killed, I do not think I would be able to hold up my head for days. But, oh, to know that some of you are losing your souls and that you are every day getting nearer and nearer to your eternal doom! "Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?"

I often wonder why some of you come to hear me as you do. It puzzles me, for I see no reason why you should do so. I offer you no amusement. I tell you no comical stories, but I seek to break your hearts with the hammer of the Word of God! You come and you go, yet you get no blessing as far as I can see. Are you content to always have it so? If you are, I am not content! I am at least responsible for faithfully warning you and honestly preaching to you the great Gospel message, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,

and you shall be saved." Every time I stand in this pulpit, there is somebody here who never comes again–he cannot come again, for he dies before the next Lord's-Day. So large is the congregation here that I may almost say, speaking according to the laws of probability, that it is almost certain that some one of us will have gone the way of all flesh before this week is gone. Who will it be? May God take the ripe and spare the green! May He take those who are ready and spare those who are not ready! But, better still, may He lead us all to trust in the Savior and then we shall all be ready whenever the summons comes! May He do so, for His name's sake! Amen. –Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

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SERMON 3525

God's Overtaking Mercy

"And He [the Angel of the Lord] said, Hagar, Sarah's maid, where have you come from? And where will you go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarah."

Genesis 16:8

HAGAR had lived for many years in Abraham's family. This was no small advantage. While all the rest of the world was in heathendom, the Light of God shone brightly in Abraham's tent. Not only was Abraham, himself, a worshipper of the Most High God, but he commanded his household after him. We may rest assured that there were family gatherings for devotion–that the Patriarch took occasion, both by precept and example, to teach the

knowledge of the true God to all who were in his service. His was the central spot of the Light of God in the world–and all around him was the thick gloom of heathenism. Yet I do not find that Hager, during the years she lived with Abraham, even when she saw his faith in going forth from his kindred and his country, and dwelling in tents in the promised land–I do not find that she, herself, received any personal call from God, or had a word from the Angel of Mercy to her own soul. And truly in this she is like very many servants, yes, and sons and daughters, too, in godly families who are surrounded by the Light of God, but yet see not–who are where God speaks–and yet He has not spoken personally to them. Who enjoy the means of Grace, but have never yet got the Grace of the means–who are themselves strangers in the midst of Israel, foreigners, though they dwell in the land, itself! Now it would be a source of the greatest imaginable joy to many of us if some of these should be called as Hagar was–should hear the voice from Heaven and be enabled to make the double discovery which she made, namely, that God saw her, and that she might come into contact with God–might look to Him who had seen her!

At this time I shall first direct your attention to a very interesting circumstance, namely–

THE SINGULAR SEASON CHOSEN BY GOD FOR THE INTERPOSITION OF HIS MERCY. Let us dwell on that a moment. God displays His Sovereignty in saving souls, both in the

souls whom He chooses to save, in the instrumentality He uses in calling them, and in the conditions of mind in which He finds them when He is pleased to look upon them in mercy.

Now Hagar at that time–at the time when the Angel called to her seemed to be in somewhat an unlikely state to be visited of God. She was, first of all, at that moment smarting under a sense of wrong. She felt that Sarah had not treated her well and in all probability Sarah had not. The Eastern mistress is often very tyrannical towards her servants, and Hagar stood very much in the position of a slave. We do not doubt but what the jealous wife had been very severe–unjustly severe towards the woman. There she sat by the well, feeling bitterness in her own soul, that in the house of good people where she had expected better things, she had been treated with injustice. It did not seem likely that the God of Abraham would call her when her heart was seething like a pot with indignation against the household where God was worshipped! At the same time, as she turned the matter over and her soul grew more and more bitter within her, I should not wonder but what she felt she had brought a good deal of it upon herself. She was but the servant and she had desired to play the mistress. She had despised the mistress–no doubt spoken to her very contemptuously–and now it had returned upon her and she was made to suffer for her own pride. Her proud, fierce spirit, perhaps, did not admit it, but yet she must have felt in her conscience that

much of what was wrong about her she had, notwithstanding, brought upon herself. Now when a person is under such a feeling as that, disturbed, tossed to and fro, vexed, distracted–it does not seem a likely time for them to hear the voice of God speaking to their souls!

Moreover, at that moment she was leaving all that was good. She had turned her back upon the household, the chosen household–left it, I will not say deliberately, but at any rate she had left it. She was going down into Egypt–going "anywhere, anywhere out of the world," so that she could but get away from the place where her bondage had become irksome. She was going, she scarcely knew where, but she probably did know that she was going into heathendom, among heathen people. The best she could hope to meet with was separation from God. She could not but feel that it was black darkness which was before her and she was rushing madly into it because her high spirit would not bend–would not bow–would not yield before the majesty of the Most High. I think I see her there, her eyes red with weeping, her spirit broken down with the hunger of her journey, sitting a while and refreshed a moment, and resolved not to stoop and never to go back–and then, again, shuddering at the darkness that lay before her and afraid to go on. It was in such a state as that that God met with her! To all intents and purposes she was a friendless, outcast woman. She had left the only tents where she could claim a shelter. She had gone

into the wilderness–no father, no mother, no brother, no sister to care for her. She turned her back upon those who had any interest in her and now she was left alone–alone, alone in a desert land without an eye to pity or a hand to help! It was then, under those peculiar circumstances of trial and of sin commingled, that God met with her!

I have been wondering in my soul, when I turned over this text, whether there would stray into this Tabernacle some kindred case, and whether, though no angel spoke, yet the voice of man might be tonight the voice of the Messenger of the Covenant to some poor soul? I know you not by name, nor face, yet I know well your feelings! It may be tonight you are sorely angry, greatly vexed, smarting, wrathful! You have made up your mind to choose the world and give up every semblance of that which is good. It may be tonight that you have lost everything that makes earth worth living in. You long for death–you would almost seek the place where the lamps quiver on the dark river, for your spirit is bitterness, itself, your lamp of hope is gone out! Oh, but it may be that this is the night when God's mighty mercy is ordained to meet with you–the very evening in which the Lord shall call out your name and you shall feel that He knows you, your case, your circumstances and that He has come to call you to Himself and you never might have been called had not these extremities of yours brought God to your rescue and to your salvation! I do not suppose

that there will be anyone whose case exactly resembles that of the text, but it has sometimes happened that the turning point of human life has been the point of great sorrow, great penury and distress of mind on account of some gigantic fault, or it has been the time of some dreadful alternative put before the soul in which it seemed as though it must be God or devil that night–Heaven or Hell that night–eternal joy or eternal misery that night! On some such strange occasion as this in your mental history you have come here tonight–may God, who is here, speak with you! A singular season for mercy! Now, secondly, let us look at–

II. THE MODE OF MERCY, OR THE HOME QUESTIONS WHICH THE ANGEL PUT TO HER.

She is sitting there by the well. It is in a desert. It may be a little oasis on the road, but there is no one within sight, nor any probability of any caravan passing that way. As she sits quite still, she hears a voice, "Hagar." She starts, she looks up and there is a brightness like the sun above her–it shines brighter than the sun at noonday! She can scarcely bear the light, and she hears it again, "Hagar, Sarah's maid." Whoever it is that is speaking knows who she is, and what she is, and all about her. "Where have you come from? And where will you go?" She is so startled–she has just been thinking of the place from where she came–and that dismal question had just been starting her mind. "Where will you go?" She felt that there was no place for her to go. It was only a choice of

equal horror–she knew not where to go. Now remark this, that very often the Gospel call comes to the sons of men not by a voice heard by the ear, but through the ministry in the way of describing the person's case with minute accuracy. It was the Savior's way of doing it when He was on earth. The woman was by the well. The Savior spoke to her. The words did not seem to take effect. He turned the subject, and He said, "Go, call your husband and come here." "I have no husband," she said. If she could blush, she blushed then–"I have no husband." "You have said well, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband. In that you said truly." Then the shock went to her very heart! She perceived that He who spoke was something more than man. And when the Gospel fully preached describes the sinner, paints him, photographs him, holds it before him and makes him say, "Why, that is me–he speaks of me–it is even me," then it is that the soul perceives what Hagar perceived–that God saw her–and that she might look to God!

Now I shall not endeavor to make any picture of you, dear Hearer. If I were to try it, I could not do it–it is only the come into the condition in which you now are out of a godly parentage? Have you got into London sin, but was there a time when you once knelt at your mother's knee at eventide and repeated a gracious prayer? Ah, you have spent many a day and many a night in the haunts of sin! You were once a teacher in the Sabbath school–once a lover of

the Gospel (at least professedly so) which now you turn from and abhor! “Where have you come from?” From old impressions that have been forgotten? From an old profession that has been disgraced? Were you once honorable, but now dishonorable–once a servant of God, but now a servant at the devil’s altar–a ringleader in sin it may be, though once you were at Heaven’s own gates? “Where have you come from?” Remember from where you have fallen, and repent! And “where will you go?” Oh, let me put the question! You stand tonight just here, “Where will you go?” Another sin tempts you tonight–will you commit it? I would gladly stand with you, as the old Scythian did of old when his country was about to be invaded by the foe. He drew a line before the chieftain of the invading host, and said, “Cross that line, and there is war forever! Stay there and there may be peace.” I put a line before your steps tonight! In the name of the everlasting God, I charge you cease from that sin! Once more commit it and it may be that no mercy’s trumpet shall ever sound out a message of forgiveness to you again! “Where will you go?” Oh, go not like a dog to your vomit, like the sow that was washed to her wallowing! Go no further, for “where will you go” in the future? A man who sins today will sin worse tomorrow, and the next day even worse. Many a young man, when he has commenced with what are called the follies of London life, had no idea that he would end it debauched, depraved and abandoned! Many a woman, when she has once

begun to trifle with sin, had no idea that her name would be coupled one day with infamy! Many a young man at his master's till is scrupulously honest, today, and never dreams that he will one day be a thief–yet he is about to take a step that will surely make him so–the first step to evil!

Oh, "where will you go?" I believe that many a man, many a woman, if they could go back 20 years and be young people, again, and have their history written, the true history as they lived it, would say, "I never shall live so. Is your servant a dog that he should do this thing?" They would have been indignant at the supposition that they could ever be capable of the transgression into which they have now actually fallen! "Where will you go?" Stop! Stop! You who are marching on to evil, stop! In the name of Him that lives, stop, lest you march to damnation and take one step that shall be your inevitable ruin, for this is the worst of it! "Where will you go?" The way of sin is the way of destruction! Men cannot sin and be happy. The end, the end, the end, the end of it, oh, think of it! It is not today, nor tomorrow, but it is that dying hour–no, it is not that only–it is that hour when, up from among the dead, you shall arise amidst the ringing of the Last Judgment trumpet! It is that opening of the books, that reading of the several dooms–that separation of the righteous from the wicked–it is that which hangs upon this question, "Where will you go?" Oh, go not to the Judgment unforgiven! Go not to the Judgment to be condemned, to

be cast into the place “where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched.” God save you, Sinner! May He save you tonight instrumentally by the force of those two questions–“Where have you come from? Where will you go?”

And now let us notice, attentively, having observed the remarkable season and the home questions, let us notice attentively–

III. THE DISCOVERY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

The description had been so accurate–“Hagar, Sarah’s maid.” The questions had been so pertinent, had stuck so close to her soul–“Where have you come from? And where will you go?” that she said, “It is God, it is God that speaks to me.” And there came home to her what she had often heard before, but never felt. “There is a God. God is not an impalpable somebody up there who has nothing to do with me, but there is God here, here, and He sees me! It is God that deals with me–not far away, asleep, or blind, but God sees me!” Oh, it is a glorious thing when a soul starts up to that conviction, “I am not alone, I am not friendless, after all. There is a God and a God who sees me and who takes such notice of note that He speaks to me.” A man is never saved until he gets to feel something of the nearness of God, God in Christ Jesus, but yet God. Consciousness of Deity is one of the marks of salvation. Now Hagar’s thoughts must have been something like this. “After all, there is Somebody that has seen me and marked all my past life,

though I did not see Him. He knows everything that I have done or thought, or said, and I perceive now that He has spoken to me, that He cares about me. I thought Abraham did not care for me, Sarah was angry, and then I said, 'No man cares for my soul, and I will go away.' Now I see that God was watching me and He has cared about me, and though He did not interpose to help me just then, just when I was so bitterly oppressed, yet I know He has cared for me, for at last, when I was sitting on this well, alone, He spoke to my soul." Sinner, I pray the Holy Spirit to make just this discovery to you, that, after all, God does care about you! He who made the heavens and the earth does think of you! Though you are little, and less than noth

"Well," Hagar said in her soul, "seeing that He cares for me, He will interpose on my behalf." The Angel, who spoke, spoke words of comfort to her heart–told her that there was a happier future in store for her than she dreamed–sent her away with a comfortable word ringing in her ears! Oh, Soul, I pray God to do that for you tonight! You have said, "God has forgotten me." He knows all about you. It may be this is the Truth of God–I hope it is–that your name is written on the palms of Jesus' hands! What if it should turn out that you, rebellious sinner that you are, are one whom God loved before the foundation of the world? What if you are one of His chosen, whom the Savior bought with His blood? What if you are one who shall surely sit in Heaven, wear the white robe and

sing the new song–what if you are a favored one of the Most High? Oh, I think I hear you say, “If I had half a thought that that was true, I would not lie down in despair–I would up and bestir myself and I would have done with my old companions! I would have done with my old sins, if that were true!” Oh, Soul, I cannot tell you that it is true–I hope it is–but I can tell you one thing that is true, namely, that if you will now come and put your trust in Jesus Christ, and repent of your iniquities,then it is all true! I can only know your election by your calling! I can only tell your calling by your repentance and by your faith! And if you should find peace, tonight, and I pray you may, then you are God’s beloved! He who made the heavens loves you! He who made the earth bought you with His blood and Heaven would not be complete without you! What if you have been far off by wicked works, yet still you are a child and Heaven shall yet ring with music on your return! What if you have been lost in the filth of drunkenness and all manner of lasciviousness, yet still a piece of God’s precious silver, the house shall be swept for you and the candle lit, and you shall yet be found and put into the Savior’s treasury! Oh, what hope this ought to make well up in the poor hopeless sinner’s heart! It is not because of your goodness, but because of His Infinite goodness that He comes to meet with you, unworthy as you are, for He sees you–He sees you–with thoughts of love He sees you and tonight He interposes as He calls you by your name!

Now when Hagar made that discovery, she made another at the same time. She said, “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?”–as much as to say, and probably she had not known it before, that as God could come to her, so she could go to God. “God has looked after me, and now I can look after Him.” There is not a great gulf between the creature and the Creator. We can send messages to Heaven and receive blessings from Heaven. She felt from that moment that God was real, living, appreciable and that God would hear her prayers and answer her petitions–and had really and literally spoken to her. Oh, I do not know anything that puts such strength into a man, such encouragement, such joy makes him so patient as the belief that God has spoken to him–that God has spoken in words of love and promise to him! Why, from that day poor Hagar would say, “I will go back. I will go back. The God of Abraham has spoken to me. Abraham may be unkind, but I will bear it, for Abraham’s God has spoken to me. Sarah may be more cross than ever–never mind, I do not know that I can tell her of it, but oh, it will be such a joy in my soul–God has spoken to me, assured me of His favor, given me a blessing!” Now that young man who thinks he has been so badly treated, if he gets his sins pardoned tonight, and the Lord speaks with him, he will go back and say, “I daresay I was as much to blame as anybody, but, whether or not, I am saved and I can now put up with anything!” And that man who is so poor that he would hardly dare come even

into this Tabernacle because his clothes were so shabby, and he was ready to say, “I will give up the battle of life. I will never try again”–oh, if he were able to say, “I know that God has spoken with me tonight, brought me to the Savior’s feet and blotted out my sin”–oh! dear Brother, you will pick up the weapons, again, and go to the battle of life once more, and your poverty will seem to have lost its edge! The bitterness will have departed! The iron will not enter into your soul! Get a word from God and know that you are His child, and you can say, “Now blow, you winds, rage, you waves, and all you elements let forth your fury–the God that rules you all is now my Friend! No hurt can you do to me!”

If you notice, it was just so with Hagar when she had heard the voice of the Lord and perceived that God saw her and that she could speak to God–then at once she went back. Told to go back, back she went–submitted herself. You don’t find her again personally–though the old blood came up afterwards in her son–you don’t find her quarrelling with her mistress, but she patiently bears her lot in the recollection of the blessing that she had received. This is just the way with men, willful, wayward, headstrong–but when they get the Grace of God, they bend their shoulders to Christ’s yoke and they become tame and gentle. Because they are happy in God’s love, they are patient in the ills of this life. Remember the story of the poor raving maniac. They had often bound him with chains, but he snapped them asunder. He had

left his family and gone to dwell among the tombs. He made night hideous with his screams and howls. Men dared not pass that way, for he was worse than a wild beast! He had cut himself and torn his flesh, torn himself with stones and briars–none could tame him! But after Jesus had said to the evil spirit, "I charge you that you come out of him," we spirit is here now, some spirit driven to it by suffering, by neglect, by injustice from others–and also by its own personal sin–if the Lord brings you to trust in Jesus, His dear Son, and see your sin all laid upon Him, then you will, even at this moment, be a different man! Your wife will scarcely know you, nor your children, either! You will become another than you have ever been before. You will go back to your business, back to your burdens, back to your sufferings and bear them all for the sake of Him that spoke out of Heaven and saved your soul!

Now the most of this I daresay is not applicable to the most of you. You know I have been thinking, while preaching, that you might say I had not been preaching except to some one or two that were here. Well, I will tell you my excuse. "What man of you, if he has an hundred sheep, if he loses one, does not leave the ninety and nine, and go after that which is gone astray?" After that "gone-astray one" I have gone! And my Master, too! Amen.

Ge 16:13 • Omniscience

SERMON 0085

Omniscience

"You God see me."

Genesis 16:13

THERE are more eyes fixed on man then he knows of–he sees not as he is seen. He thinks himself obscure and unobserved but let him remember that a cloud of witnesses hold him in full survey. Wherever he is, at every instant, there are beings whose attention is riveted by his doings and whose gaze is constantly fixed by his actions. Within this Hall, I doubt not, there are myriads of spirits unseen to us. Spirits good and spirits evil are upon us tonight. The eyes of angels rest attentively–those perfect spirits regard our order. They hear our songs. They observe our prayers. It may be they fly

to Heaven to convey to their companions news of any sinners who are born of God, for there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.

Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth, both when we wake and when we sleep. Midnight is peopled with shadows unseen and daylight has its spirits, too. The prince of the power of the air, attended by his squadron of evil spirits flits through the ether often. Evil spirits watch our halting every instant, while good spirits, battling for the salvation of God's elect, keep us in all our ways and watch over our feet, lest at any time we dash them against a stone. Hosts of invisible beings attend on every one of us at different periods of our lives. We must remember, also, that not only do the spirits of angels, elect or fallen, look on us, but "the spirits of the just made perfect" continually observe our conversation.

We are taught by the Apostle that the noble army of martyrs and the glorious company of confessors are "witnesses" of our race to Heaven, for he says, "seeing, then, that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us." From yon blue Heaven the eyes of the glorified look down on us. There the children of God are sitting on their starry thrones, observing whether we manfully uphold the banner around which they fought. They behold our valor, or they detect our cowardice. And they are intent to witness

our valiant deeds of noble daring, or our ignominious retreat in the day of battle.

Remember that, sons of men–you are not unregarded. You do not pass through this world in unseen obscurity. In darkest shades of night eyes glare on you through the gloom. In the brightness of the day angels are spectators of your labors. From Heaven there look down upon you spirits who see all that finite beings are capable of beholding. But if we think that thought worth treasuring up, there is one which sums up that and drowns it, even as a drop is lost in the ocean. It is the thought, "You God see me." It is nothing that angels see me, it is nothing that devils watch me, it is nothing that the glorified spirits observe me–compared with the overwhelming Truth–God at all times see me.

Let us dwell on that now and may God the Spirit make use of it to our spiritual profit! In the first place, I shall notice the general doctrine, that God observes all men. In the second place I shall notice the particular doctrine, "You God see me." And in the third place I shall draw from it some practical and comforting inferences to different orders of persons now assembled, each of whom may learn something from this short sentence.

In the first place, THE GENERAL DOCTRINE, that God sees us.

This may be easily proved, even from the nature of God. It were hard to suppose a God who could not see His own creatures. It were difficult in the extreme to imagine a Divinity who could not

behold the actions of the works of His hands. The word which the Greeks applied to God implied that He was a God who could see. They called him Theos (Theos). And they derived that word, if I read rightly, from the root Theisthai (Theisthai), to see, because they regarded God as being the all-seeing One, whose eyes took in the whole universe at a glance and whose knowledge extended far beyond that of mortals.

God Almighty, from His very essence and nature, must be an Omniscient God. Strike out the thought that He sees me and you extinguish Deity by a single stroke. There were no God if that God had no eyes, for a blind God were no God at all. We could not conceive such an one. Stupid as idolaters may be, it were very hard to think that even they had fashioned a blind god–even they have given eyes to their gods, though they see not. Juggernaut has eyes stained with blood and the gods of the ancient Romans had eyes–and some of them were called far-seeing gods.

Even the heathen can scarce conceive of a god that has no eyes to see and certainly we are not so mad as to imagine for a single second that there can be a Deity without the knowledge of everything that is done by man beneath the sun. I say it were as impossible to conceive of a God who did not observe everything as to conceive of a round square. When we say, “You God,” we do, in fact, comprise in the word “God” the idea of a God who sees everything, “You God see me.”

Yet, further, we are sure that God must see us for we are taught in the Scriptures that God is everywhere and if God is everywhere, what does hinder Him from seeing all that is done in every part of His universe? God is here–I do not simply live near Him, but "in Him I live and move and have my being." There is not a particle of this mighty space which is not filled with God–go forth into the pure air and there is not a particle of it where God is not. In every portion of this earth whereon I tread and the spot whereon I move, there is God–

"Within Your circling power I stand;
On every side I find Your hand–
Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,
I am surrounded still with God."

Take the wings of the morning and fly beyond the most distant star–but God is there. God is not a Being confined to one place, but He is everywhere. He is there and there and there. In the deepest mine man ever bored, in the unfathomable caverns of the ocean, in the heights, towering and lofty, in the gulfs that are deep which fathom can never reach. God is everywhere. I know from His own words that He is a God who fills immensity. The heavens are not wide enough for Him. He grasps the sun with one hand and the moon with the other. He stretches Himself through the unnavigated ether, where the wing of seraph has never flapped–there is God–

and where the solemnity of silence has never been broken by the song of Cherub, there is God. God is everywhere.

Conceive space and God and space are equal. Well, then, if God is everywhere, how can I refrain from believing that God sees me wherever I am? He does not look upon me from a distance–if He did, I might screen myself beneath the shades of night. But He is here, close by my side and not by me only but in me. Within this heart. Where these lungs beat. Or where my blood gushes through my veins. Or where this pulse is beating, like a muffled drum, my march to death–God is there–within this mouth. In this tongue, in these eyes.

In each of you God dwells–He is within you and around you. He is beside you and behind and before. Is not such knowledge too wonderful for you? Is it not high and you cannot attain unto it? I say, how can you resist the doctrine which comes upon you like a flash of lightning, that if God is everywhere He must see everything and that therefore it is a Truth, "You God see me."

But, lest any should suppose that God may be in a place and yet slumbering, let me remind him that in every spot to which he can travel, there is, not simply God, but also God's activity. Wherever I go I shall find not a slumbering God but a God busy about the affairs of this world. Take me to the green sward and pleasant pasture–why, every little blade of grass there has God's hand in it, making it grow and every tiny daisy, which a child likes to pluck,

looks up with its little eyes and says “God is in me, circulating my sap and opening my little flower.”

Go where you will through this London, where vegetation is scarcely to be found. Look up yonder and see those rolling stars–God is active there–it is His hand that wheels along the stars and moves the moon in her nightly course. But if there are neither stars nor moon–there are those clouds, heavy with darkness, like the ears of night. And who steers them across the sea of azure? Does not the breath of God blowing upon them drive them along the heavens? God is everywhere, not as a slumbering God, but as an active God.

I am upon the sea and there I see God making the everlasting pulse of nature beat in constant ebbs and flows. I am in the pathless desert, but above me screams the nature and I see God winging the wild bird’s flight. I am shut up in a hermitage. But an insect drops from its leaf and I see in that insect life which God preserves and sustains. Shut me out from the animate creation and put me on the barren rock, where moss itself cannot find a footing–I shall there discern my God bearing up the pillars of the universe and sustaining that bare rock as a part of the colossal foundation whereon He has built the world–

“Wherever we turn our gazing eyes –
Your radiant footsteps shine.
Ten thousand pleasing wonders rise,
And speak their source Divine.

The living tribes of countless forms,
In earth and sea and air,
The meanest flies, the smallest worms,
Almighty power declare."

You shall see God everywhere–if you see Him not around you, look within you and is He not there? Is not your blood now flowing through every portion of your body, to and from your heart? And is not God there active? Do you not know that every pulse you beat needs a volition of Deity as its permit and yet more, needs an exertion of Divine power as its cause? Do you not know that every breath you breathe needs Deity for its inspiration and expiration and that you must die if God withdraw that power? If we could look within us, there are mighty works going on in this mortal fabric–the garment of the soul–which would astonish you and make you see, indeed, that God is not asleep, but that He is active and busy.

There is a working God everywhere, a God with His eyes open everywhere, a God with His hands at work everywhere. A God doing something, not a God slumbering but a God laboring. Oh, Sirs, does not the conviction flash upon your mind with a brightness, against which you cannot shut your eyes that since God is everywhere, and everywhere active, it follows, as a necessary and unavoidable consequence, that He must see us and know all our actions and our deeds?

I have one more proof to offer which I think to be conclusive. God, we may be sure, sees us, when we remember that He can see a thing before it happens. If He beholds an event before it transpires, surely reason dictates He must see a thing that is happening now. Read those ancient prophecies. Read what God said should be the end of Babylon and of Nineveh. Just turn to the chapter where you read of Edom's doom, or where you are told that Tyre shall be desolate. Then walk through the lands of the East and see Nineveh and Babylon cast to the ground, the cities ruined. And then reply to this question–"Is not God a God of foreknowledge? Can He not see the things that are to come?"

Yes, there is not a thing which shall transpire in the next cycle of a thousand years which is not already passed through the infinite mind of God. There is not a deed which shall be transacted tomorrow, or the next day, or the next, through all eternity, if days can be eternal, but God knows it. And if He knows the future, does He not know the present? If His eyes look through the dim haze which veils us from the things of futurity, can He not see that which is standing in the brightness of the present? If He can see a great distance, can He not see near at hand! Surely that Divine Being who discerned the end from the beginning must know the things which occur now. And it must be true that "You God see us," even the whole of us, the entire race of man. So much for the general and universally acknowledged doctrine.

II. Now, I come, in the second place, to the SPECIAL DOCTRINE –"You God see me."

Come now, there is a disadvantage in having so many hearers as there is always in speaking to more than one at a time because persons are apt to think, "he does not speak to me." Jesus Christ preached a very successful sermon once when he had but one hearer because He had the woman sitting on the well and she could not say that Christ was preaching to her neighbor. He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here." There was something there which smote her heart. She could not evade the confession of her guilt. But in regard to our congregations, the old orator might soon see his prayer answered, "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears," for when the Gospel is preached, we lend our ears to everybody.

We are accustomed to hear for our neighbors and not for ourselves. Now, I have no objection to your lending anything else you like but I have a strong objection to you lending your ears. I shall be glad if you will keep them at home for a minute or two, for I want to make you hear for yourselves this Truth, "You God see me."

Mark, God sees you–selecting anyone out of this congregation– He sees you. He sees you as much as if there were nobody else in the world for Him to look at. If I have as many people as there are here to look at, of course my attention must be divided. But the

infinite mind of God is able to grasp a million objects at once and yet to set itself as much upon one as if there were nothing else but that one. So that you, tonight, are looked at by God as much as if throughout space there were not another creature but yourself. Can you conceive that?

Suppose the stars blotted out in darkness. Suppose the angels dead. I imagine the glorified spirits above are all gone and you are left alone, the last man. And there is God looking at you. What an idea it would be for you to think of–that there was only you to be looked at! How steadily He could observe you! How well He would discern you! But mark you–God does really look at you this night as much, as entirely, as absolutely without division of sight–as if you were the only being His hands had ever made. Can you grasp that? God sees you with His eyes, with the whole of His sight–you–you–you–you are the particular object of His attention at this very moment. God's eyes are looking down upon you–remember that!

In the next place God sees you entirely. He does not merely note your actions. He does not simply notice what is the appearance of your countenance. He does not merely take into His eyesight what your posture may be. But remember, God sees what you are thinking of. He looks within. God has a window in every man's heart through which He looks. He does not want you to tell Him

what you are thinking about–He can see that, He can read right through you.

Do you not know that God can read what is written on the rocks at the bottom of the ocean, even though ten thousand fathoms of dark water roll above? And I tell you He can read every word that is in your breasts. He knows every thought, every imagination, every conception, your every unformed imagination. He sees it all, every particle, every atom of it–

"My thoughts, scarce struggling into birth,
Great God! are known to You–
Abroad, at home, still I'm enclosed
With Your immensity.
Behind I glance and You are there–
Before me, shines Your name;
And 'tis Your strong almighty hand
Sustains my tender frame."

Can you appropriate that thought? From the crown of your head to the sole of your foot, God is examining you now. His scalpel is in your heart, His lancet in your breast, He is searching your heart and trying your reins. He knows you behind and before. "You God see me." You see me entirely.

Note again–God sees you constantly. You are sometimes watched by man and then your conversation is tolerably correct. At other times you seek retirement and you indulge yourselves in things

which you would not dare to do before the gaze of your fellow creatures. But recollect, wherever you are, God sees you. You may lay yourselves down by the side of the hidden brook where the willows shelter you, where all is still, without a sound–God is there looking at you! You may retire to your chamber and draw the curtains of your couch and throw yourself down for repose in midnight's gloomiest shade–God sees you there! I remember going into a castle sometime ago, down many a winding stair, round and round, and round and round–where light never penetrated.

At last I came to a space, very narrow, about the length of a man. "There," said the keeper, "such-and-such-a-one was shut up for so many years, a ray of light never having penetrated–sometimes they tortured him but his shrieks never reached through the thickness of these walls and never ascended that winding staircase–here he died and there, Sir, he was buried," pointing to the ground. But though that man had none on earth to see him, God saw him. Yes, you may shut me up forever where ear shall never hear my prayer, where eyes shall never see my misery. But one eyes shall look upon me and one countenance smile on me, if I suffer for righteousness' sake. If for Christ's sake I am in prison, one hand shall be upon me and one voice shall say, "Fear not. I will help you"–at all times, in all places, in all your thoughts, in all your acts, in all your privacy, in all your public doings, at every season–this is true, "You God see me."

Yet once more–"You God see me" supremely. I can see myself, but not as well as either my friends or foes. Men can see me better than I can see myself but man cannot see me as God sees me. A man skilled in the human heart might interpret my deeds and translate their motives but he could not read my heart as God can read it. None can tell another as God can tell us all–we do not know ourselves as God knows us–within yourself knowledge, with all you have been told by others, God knows you more fully than you know yourself–no eyes can see you as God sees you.

You may act in daylight. You may not be ashamed of your actions. You may stand up before men and say, "I am a public man, I wish to be observed and noticed." You may have all your deeds chronicled and all men may hear of them, but I know men will never know you as God will know you. And if you could be chained, as Paul was, with a soldier at your arm–if he were with you night and day, sleeping with you, rising with you–if he could hear all your thoughts he could not know you as God knows you, for God sees you superlatively and supremely.

Let me now apply that to you–"You God see me." This is true of each of you. Try and think of it for a moment. Even as my eyes rests on you, so, in a far, far greater sense do God's eyes rest on you. Standing, sitting, wherever you are, this is true, "You God see me." It is said that when you heard Rowland Hill, if you were stuck in a window, or farther away at the door, you always had the

conviction that he was preaching at you. Oh, I wish I could preach like that! If I could make you feel that I was preaching at you in particular, that I singled you out and shot every word at you, then I should hope for some effect. Try and think, then, "You God see me."

III. Now I come to DIFFERENT INFERENCES for different persons, to serve different purposes.

First, to the prayerful. Prayerful man, prayerful woman, here is a consolation–God sees you–and if He can see you, surely He can hear you. Why, we can often hear people when we cannot see them. If God is so near to us and if His voice is like the thunder, surely His ears are as good as His eyes and He will be sure to answer us. Perhaps you cannot say a word when you pray. Never mind–God does not want to hear. He can tell what you mean even by seeing you. "There," says the Lord, "is a child of Mine in prayer. He says not a word. But do you see that tear rolling down his cheek? Do you hear that sigh?"

Oh, mighty God, you can see both tear and sigh. You can read desire when desire has not clothed itself in words. The naked wish God can interpret. He needs us not to light the candle of our desires with language. He can see the candle before it is lit–

"He knows the words we mean to speak,
When from our lips they cannot break,"

by reason of the anguish of our spirit. He knows the desire when words stagger under the weight of it. He knows the wish when language fails to express it. “You God see me.”

Ah, God, when I cannot pray with words, I will throw myself flat on my face and I will groan my prayer. And if I cannot groan it I will sigh it. And if I cannot sigh it I will wish it–and when these eye-strings break and when death has sealed these lips, I will enter Heaven with a prayer which You will not hear but which You will see–the prayer of my inmost spirit–when my heart and my flesh fail me, that You may be the strength of my life and portion forever. There is comfort for you, you praying ones, that God sees you. That is enough. If you cannot speak He can see you.

I have given a word for the prayerful. Now a word for the careful. Some here are very full of care, doubts, anxieties and fears. “Oh, Sir,” you say, “if you could come to my poor house, you would not wonder that I should feel anxious. I have had to part with much of my little furniture to provide myself with a living. I am brought very low. I have not a friend in London. I am alone, alone in the whole wide world.” Stop, stop, Sir! You are not alone in the world. There is at least one eyes regarding you. There is one hand that is ready to relieve you. Don’t give up in despair. If your case be ever so bad, God can see your care, your troubles and your anxieties.

To a good man it is enough to see destitution to relieve it. And for God it is enough to see the distresses of His family at once to

supply their wants. If you were lying wounded on the battlefield, if you could not speak, you know right well your comrades who are coming by with an ambulance will pick you up, if they but see you. And that is enough for you. So if you are lying on the battlefield of life, God sees you. Let that cheer you–He will relieve you. For He only needs to look at the woe of His children at once to relieve them. Go on then–hope yet. In night's darkest hour, hope for a brighter tomorrow. God sees you, whatever you are doing–"He knows your cares, your tears,Your sighs–He shall lift up your head."

And now a word to the slandered. There are some of us who come into a very large share of slander. It is very seldom that the slander market is much below par. It usually runs up at a very mighty rate. And there are persons who will take shares to any amount. If men could dispose of railway stock as they can of slander, those who happen to have any scrip here would be rich enough by tomorrow at twelve o'clock. There are some who have a superabundance of that matter. enough to write sense, nor honesty sufficient to keep him to the Truth, who, therefore, writes the most infamous libels upon some of God's servants, compared with whom he himself is nothing and whom for very envy he chooses to depreciate.

Well, what does it matter? Suppose you are slandered. Here is a comfort–"You God see me." They say that suchand-such is your

motive, but you need not answer them. You can say, “God knows that matter.” You are charged with such-and-such a thing of which you are innocent. Your heart is right concerning the deed, you have never done it–well, you have no need to battle for your reputation. You need only point your finger to the sky and say, “there is a witness there who will right me at last–there is a Judge of all the earth, whose decision I am content to wait. His answer will be a complete exoneration of me and I shall come out of the furnace like gold seven times purified.”

Young men, are you striving to do good and do others impute wrong motives to you? Do not be particular about answering them, just go straight on and your life will be the best refutation of the calumny. David’s brothers said that in his pride and the naughtiness of his heart he had come to see the battle. “Ah,” thought David, “I will answer you by-andby.” Off he went across the plain to fight Goliath. He cut off his head and then came back to his brothers with a glorious answer in his conquering hand. If any man desires to reply to the false assertions of his enemies, let him go and do good and he needs not say a word–that will be his answer.

I am the subject of detraction. But I can point to hundreds of souls that have been saved on earth by my feeble instrumentality and my reply to all my enemies is this, “You may say what you like. But seeing these lame men are healed, can you say anything against them? You may find fault with the style or manner but God saves

souls and we will hold up that fact, like giant Goliath's head, to show you that although it was nothing but a sling or stone, so much the better, for God has gotten the victory." Go straight on and you will live down your slanderers. And remember when you are most distressed, "You God see me."

Now, a sentence or two to some of you who are ungodly and know not Christ. What shall I say to you but this–how heinous are your sins when they are put in the light of this doctrine! Remember, Sinner, whenever you sin, you sin in the teeth of God. It is bad enough to steal in darkness but he is a very thief who steals in daylight. It is vile, it is fearfully vile to commit a sin which I desire to cover, but to do my sin when man is looking at me shows much hardiness of heart. Oh, Sinner, remember, you sin with God's eyes looking on you. How black must be your heart! How awful your sin! For you sin in the very face of justice when God's eyes are fixed on you!

I was looking, the other day, at a glass beehive and it was very singular to observe the motions of the creatures inside. Well, now, this world is nothing but a huge glass beehive. God looks down on you and He sees you all. You go into your little cells in the streets of this huge city. You go to your business, your pleasure, your devotions and your sins. But remember, wherever you go, you are like the bees under a great glass shade–you can never get away from God's observation. When children disobey before the eyes of

their parents it shows that they are hardened. If they do it behind their parents' back, it proves that there is some shame left.

But you, Sirs, sin when God is present with you. You sin while God's eyes are searching you through and through. Even now you are thinking hard thoughts of God while God is hearing all those silent utterances of your evil hearts. Does not that render your sin extremely heinous? Therefore, I beseech you, think of it and repent of your wickedness that your sins may be blotted out through Jesus Christ.

And one more thought. If God sees you, O Sinner, how easy it will be to condemn you. In the late horrible case of Palmer, witnesses were required and a jury was empanelled to try the accused. But if the judge could have mounted the bench and have said, "I saw the man myself mix the poison. I stood by and saw him administer it. I read his thoughts. I knew for what purpose he did it, I read his heart. I was with him when he first conceived the black design and I have tracked him in all his evasions, in all those acts by which he sought to blindfold justice. And I can read in his heart that he knows himself to be guilty now."

If the judge could have said that the case then would have been over. The trial would have been little more than a form. What will you think, O Sinner, when you are brought before God and God shall say, "You did so-and-so," and will mention what you did in the darkness of the night when no eyes was there? You will start

back amazed and say, “Oh, heavens! How did God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?” He will say, “Stop, Sinner. I have more to startle you yet.” And He will begin to unfold the records of the past–leaf after leaf He will read of the diary He has kept of your existence.

Oh, I can see you as he reads page after page, your knees are knocking together, your hair is standing on end, your blood is frozen in your veins, congealed for fright and you stand like a second Niobe, a rock bedewed with tears. You are thunderstruck to find your thoughts read out before the sun, while men and angels hear. You are amazed beyond degree to hear your imaginations read, to see your deeds photographed on the great white Throne and to hear a voice saying, “Rebellion at such a time. Uncleanness at such a time. Evil thoughts at such an hour. Sabbath-breaking on such a day, blasphemy at such a time, theft at such an hour. Hard thoughts of God at such a period. Rejection of His grace on such a day. Stifling of conscience at another time.”

And so onto the end of the chapter and then the awful final doom–“Sinner, depart accursed! I saw you sin, it needs no witnesses. I heard your oath. I heard your blasphemy. I saw your theft. I read your thoughts. Depart! Depart! I am clear when I judge you. I am justified when I condemn you–for you have done this evil in My sight.”

Lastly, you ask me what you must do to be saved. And I will never let a congregation go, I hope, till I have told them that. Hear, then, in a few words, the way of salvation. It is this. Christ said to the Apostles, “Preach the Gospel to every creature–he that believes and his baptized shall be saved and he that believes not shall be damned.” Or, to give you Paul’s version, when he spoke to the jailor, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.”

You ask what you are to believe. Why, this–that Christ died and rose again. That by His death He did bear the punishment of all Believers. And that by His resurrection He did wipe out the faults of all His children. And if God gives you faith, you will believe that Christ died for you. And you will be washed in His blood and you will trust His mercy and His love to be your everlasting redemption when the world shall end.

Ge 16:13 • Hagar at the Fountain

SERMON 1869

H*agar At The Fountain*

"And she called the name of the Lord that spoke unto her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees: for she said, Have I, also, here looked after Him who sees me? the well was called Beer-Lahai-Roi."

Genesis 16:13, 14

You know the story of Hagar. I am not going to deal with the allegorical meaning of it–that would be apart from our subject this morning. I shall speak of the incident simply as it stands, but even then I shall not use it strictly as a case of sure conversion, for I am not certain that it was such. I suppose Hagar to have been an Egyptian woman, probably one of the maidservants who were given by the King of Egypt to Abram at that unhappy time when

Abram's faith failed him and he went down into Egypt and requested Sarai to conceal the fact that she was his wife. Sin, whenever it is committed by the child of God, is sure to involve him in sorrow. In the long run, the result of any false dealing comes home to the Believer and it does so in very unexpected ways. Hagar became the special maid of Sarai. God had promised to Abram that he should have a son and that thus he should be the father of nations. That blessing did not appear likely to come to him, for there were no children born to Sarai, nor did there seem to be the possibility of any.

Husband and wife were both old and well stricken in years. No special mention had been made of Sarai in the promise as it then stood and, therefore, it was not clear to Abram but what some other might be the mother of the expected seed. And when, in her unbelief, Sarai proposed that her maid should become his secondary wife, Abram listened to her. According to the custom of the times and of oriental nations, this act was right enough, but as it was not really right, in itself, and showed littleness of faith on Abram's part. Sorrow soon came of it. Hagar began to behave herself proudly towards her mistress and her mistress, finding herself despised, complained to Abram and began, also, to behave harshly towards her.

The wrong element would not work in Abram's family. It might do very well for the Canaanites around him, but in a house where

God was feared, it was an evil principle and could not work for peace or holiness. Hagar's high Egyptian spirit, finding herself likely to be famous in the house, would not brook the rule of her mistress, nor could Sarai, the quiet, but queenly matron, put up with the insults of her slave. The mistress became hard and harsh to her handmaid. Worked into a frenzy, Hagar flies from the tent and makes the best of her way on the road to Egypt, where she originally came. But what could a lone woman do in her condition, all alone in the wilderness?

Wearied with her journey, she spies a fountain and sits there. It was the likeliest place for any passing traveler to find her and she sits down, there, in her proud despair. Perhaps they will send for her. Abram may repent his yielding to Sarai and send for her. She will wait there and if no one comes to her aid, she will die rather than return. She does not appear, at that time, to have lifted up her heart in prayer to God. She had lived in a godly household, but possibly, as she thought herself ill-treated, she had conceived a dislike towards the God of her mistress. Such harsh treatment as she had received was not likely to incline her towards the religion of those from whom she had fled! She was godless and hopeless. Do you not see her crouching at the fountain, half mad with pride and vexation and, at the same time, stricken with a sullen despair? She knows not what she is to do, neither does any way of hope open before her. Alas, poor Hagar!

But although there was no prayer of hers for God to hear, another voice spoke in His ear. The Angel who suddenly appeared to her said, “The Lord has heard your affliction.” That is a very beautiful sentence. You have not prayed. You have been willful, reckless and, at last, despairing and, therefore, you have not cried unto the Lord. But your deep sorrow has cried to Him! You are oppressed and the Lord has undertaken for you. You are suffering heavily and God, the AllPitiful, has heard your affliction. Grief has an eloquent voice when Mercy is the listener. Woe has a plea which Goodness cannot resist. Though sorrow and woe ought to be attended with prayer, yet even when supplication is not offered, the heart of God is moved by misery, itself. In Hagar’s case the Lord heard her affliction–He looked forth from His Glory on that lone Egyptian woman who was in the deepest distress in which a woman could well be placed–and He came speedily to her help.

We have not much difficulty in deciding who the Angel was that appeared to her. We are sure that this Angel of the Lord was that great Messenger of the Covenant who was, afterwards, to appear in actual flesh and blood, but who many a time before He was born at Bethlehem, anticipated His descent to earth and visited it in human form. His delights were always with the sons of men and so when there was a message to be brought to men, that Blessed One, the Second Person of the Divine Unity condescended to be the bearer of it! In the present instance I discern foreshadowing of the Son of

Man! I perceive sure traces of the Christ who, in a later age, would dwell among mankind! Read a little before the text and you will find it written, the Angel of the Lord "found her"–it is the deed of the good Shepherd to find a lost sheep! I see before me that Son of Man who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Surely this is that great Shepherd of the sheep who goes after His sheep until He finds it! He has come far into the waste after her and He rested not until He found her. Great gladness filled His heart, as when a merchantman finds a pearl of great price. I see high joy in the Countenance of this Angel of Jehovah. We read in verse seven, "The Angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water." Significant place! Can you forget how, when that Blessed One was here in flesh and blood, He found another woman at the well. "Jesus being wearied, sat thus on the well. There comes a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus says unto her, Give Me to drink." Does not this story of Hagar read like a rehearsal of that Samaritan incident? "He found her by a fountain of water."

This fountain is further said to be "in the wilderness." Note that. Remember those words of His when He actually became Incarnate–"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the 99 in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he finds it?" Again we read, "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness." This wonderful appearance of the Christ before He actually assumed our

flesh, has a likeness to His actual Incarnation of the most delightful kind. ‘Tis He! We are sure it is He! All the tones of the voice and the modes of the speech are His. That this Angel of the Lord was God, we also know, for our text says, “She called the name of Jehovah that spoke unto her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees.” The all-seeing God had veiled Himself in that angelic form! That Divine One, whom we adore as the Son of God and the Son of Man, condescended to be the Messenger of mercy to a poor slave woman who had run away from her mistress!

None but God would have thus condescended. The world had no pity in those days for slaves of any kind, much less for those who had left their master’s house. Here the Lord of Love found a noble opportunity by revealing His gracious Nature to a forlorn one. No eye pities her and no hand brought her deliverance–“Now will I arise, says the Lord.” The Angel found her and it is of that finding and of what came of it, that I am going to speak this morning. May the Holy Spirit cause the words to be with power!

In speaking of Hagar, I shall first dwell for a little upon HER REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE. I pray that to some daughter of sorrow a similar experience may come. May your case be mirrored in that of Hagar, as when one sees his face in a looking glass.

Observe that Hagar had outlawed herself. No doubt she had much to put up with, but she had been insolent and provoking to her mistress and, at last, she had, in her impatience, deliberately left the

house of Abraham and left the abode of the chosen family. Whatever that house may have been, it was the best place, then, upon the earth! It was almost the only spot under Heaven where the Lord God was known. You might have said of Abraham's family, "you are of God, little children, and the whole world lies in the Wicked One." She, an Egyptian, once benighted by the superstitious worship of her country, had enjoyed the light of the knowledge of the true God for a while. But now she had turned her back on it. She could not but have marked Abraham's high character and sincere devotion. She must have seen his true and real faith in God and the way in which he endeavored to order his household aright. Whatever faults she may have perceived there–whatever errors she may have suffered from–she could not but have noticed that there was a great difference between Abraham's tent and the abodes of Egypt!

But now she quits her place of privilege, she renounces the high hopes which surrounded her and, in her fierce passion, she rushes, she cares not where! The untamable spirit which afterwards showed itself in her son, Ishmael, raged in her bosom. So, too, have we met with those who have deliberately left the ways of God and the people of God and all semblance of goodness because they have thought themselves badly used. They have happened to suffer somewhat and, in the bitterness of their spirit, they have resolved to take no more of it. They vow that they will have nothing to do with

God, or with His people–they will turn their backs upon everything that is religious and they will mix with the world in its most ungodly form. They do not, indeed, care what becomes of them–they would flee from the Presence of God, Himself, if they could. Friends, relatives, good men and the circle of blessing they would quit and roam in a wilderness, hoping to be forgotten. Now their hand is against every man and every man's hand is against them–and in their high spirit they are prepared to defy the universe to subdue them!

While she was there, in the moment of her desperation, she was found by the Angel. He had come on purpose to seek her out and find her and He had not failed in His search, as, indeed, He never does. This was the last thing she thought of. She may have hoped to have been found by some merchants going towards Egypt, or to be picked up by certain of the wandering gypsies of the wilderness–but she had not thought that God, Himself, would come after her! What was there about her that Jehovah should come out of His place to seek her? Yet He came in unexpected Grace, as He is known to do. He remembered the low estate of His handmaiden and because His mercy endures forever, He found her by the fountain in the wilderness.

When the Angel of the Lord found Hagar, He dealt graciously with her. Indeed, this was the objective of His finding her! He came in pity, not in wrath. His first act was to awaken conviction within

her. He said to her, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, from where have you come? And where will you go?” This language is singularly like the Lord Jesus Christ’s mode of address. The name of the person is mentioned. This forcibly brings to my mind the speech of our Lord when He said unto the woman, “Mary,” and she turned and said unto Him, “Rabboni.” He says, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid”–His words are personal words and she cannot mistake them. Is not this the Lord’s way in other cases? Has He not said, “I have called you by your name”? He adds her description and reminds her that whatever else she might be, she was “Sarai’s maid.” How surprised she must have been! She had never seen the august Personage before, but evidently He had seen her, before, and knew all about her, for His words searched her through and through.

Then, further to bring her to her right senses, the Angel asks her, with touching pathos of tone–“From where have you come?” What have you left behind you? What have you given up? All your hopes lie in Abraham’s tent and you have left the place. For you, there is a high destiny, and you are flying from it. You are, after all, a favored woman and you know it not. You are flying away from that which will be your blessedness! This is the question of the Holy Spirit to every runaway rebel. O wandering Sinner, what are you doing? In fleeing from goodness, God, hope and Grace, do you know what you are leaving?

Again, He asks her, “Where will you go?” Her crouching form is before Him. She lifts up her eyes, all red with tears, and she weeps anew as He says, “And where will you go?” “Will you go further into the wilderness and die there of thirst and hunger? Will you go down into Egypt, back to all the cruelties of that benighted land? Where will you go?” It is thus the Lord meets runaway sinners that are bent upon their own destruction. He calls to them by name and asks, “From where have you come? What are you leaving? What are you losing? What are you rejecting? What are you turning your back upon? And where will you go? What can be the end of such a life as yours? Where can it carry you but to destruction? Where will you go by this course of desperate sin? Can you face the Eternal and the Judgement Seat and the curse that withers the ungodly? From where have you come and where will you go?”

It is thus, I say, that the Covenant Angel met with many of us when He awakened our consciences and made us pause in our headlong rush of sin. Some of us heard the warning voice many years ago and we can never forget it–the call rings in the chambers of our memory even now. It is thus that the Lord met with some of you a short time ago and you are at this moment filled with gratitude for the interposition. I believe that this morning the Lord will thus meet with some who are in this congregation, whom I know not, but whom He knows right well, for His eyes are resting on them now and His voice is speaking to them through my voice.

Like as He said of old, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, from where have you come? And where will you go?” so does He speak at this hour, and asks you why you are bent upon destroying your own souls!

This worked in her mind conviction, after a certain sort–and where the Son of God spiritually speaks to the heart, a deep and piercing conviction is felt! His Word lays sin bare and open–and makes the guilty conscience feel that nothing is hidden from God, but that all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. As when the butcher hangs up the body of a beast and, with a stroke, lays bare the heart and inwards of the creature, so with a single Word, the Angel of the Covenant reveals the heart of Hagar. Thus, also, the convincing Spirit deals with the sinner and lays him bare even to the backbone, till all the secrets of his soul are revealed and he cries, “You-Are-the-God-WhoSees!” The Word of the Lord, by revealing the thoughts and intents of the heart, proves its own Divine origin to him who feels its operation and thus God, Himself, is made known as speaking by the Word.

When He had thus worked conviction in her, the Angel who had found Hagar, next gave her an exhortation. He said to her, “Return unto your mistress and submit yourself under her hands.” A hard message, as it seemed to her in her pride, no doubt. “Return,” however hard the way! “Submit yourself,” however humiliating the deed! Hagar is not spared–the Angel puts His words very plainly. If it were kindness to say, “Return,” it is still greater kindness to say

severely, but truthfully, “Return to your mistress.” Mark, not to your master, only, but, “to your mistress.” He also says, “Submit yourself under her hands,” to show that the submission must be entire and absolute. Put yourself back into your right place and then Grace can deal with you. When the Covenant Angel deals with any man or woman among us, He will say, “Return, return, return. Repent and be converted. Turn you; turn you. Why will you die?”

The Gospel does not spare the sinner the pangs of repentance. It calls him to sorrow after a godly sort. You must abhor your sins and flee from them, or your sins will be your ruin! You must so repent of your sins as to make such restitution as may be possible. You must replace stolen goods and recall false words. You must humble yourself where you have been insolent. You must bow yourself down before God and submit to man, also, so far as you have wronged him. God the Holy Spirit, when He deals with a proud, unrighteous heart, lays justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet–and sweeps away as with hail every refuge of lies. He cries, “Return! Submit!” and puts the matter so closely home that there is no misunderstanding it! He bids the man confess and forsake his sins and gives him no hope of mercy unless he will do so. God has not met with you, Friend, if you go on in your sins! God in mercy has not met with you if sin remains sweet to you and repentance is unknown to your heart. You must go back to the place

from where you came and you must submit yourself, or nothing will go right with you.

When the Angel of the Lord had thus spoken with Hagar, calling her by her name, working conviction in her heart and pointing out her duty, He then added rich promises–promises which, to her mind, must have been very unexpected and consoling. She was a runaway slave girl, but He says to her, "I will multiply your seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude, and you shall bear a son, and shall call his name Ishmael." That name signifies, "God hears me," because the Lord had heard her affliction. The Angel went on to tell her what this child should be who would be the joy of her heart. Little does a sinner know what blessings are in store for him, if he repents and submits to the Lord's will. He is come to the borders of the wilderness of death, but God intends to bring him back to peace, joy and happiness! Oh, if only the proud sinner knew what God's Grace will do for him, it would break his heart to think he had been so rebellious! Oh, if the obstinate know what a place there is at the Father's board and in the Father's heart for the returning prodigal and how much he is still beloved, notwithstanding all his naughtiness, he would quicken his footsteps and wish to have wings upon his heels, that he might fly back to his Father's house and his Father's bosom!

O Soul, I do pray that Jesus Christ may find you this morning and say to you, "Return unto Me, for I have blotted out your sins like a

cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities. Return unto Me, for I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you."

So you see, Hagar's experience was a very remarkable one, although by no means peculiar to herself. Blessed be God, it has happened to tens of thousands, that where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound! When they have run away and outlawed themselves, Grace has followed them, Grace has convicted them, Grace has admonished them and Grace has made large promises to them. Their proud heart has yielded and their spirit has become gentle as that of a little child, as Hagar's spirit was, and they have returned to the great Father's house and submitted themselves. And rich blessings have become theirs. Is it not written, "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land"? Though Hagar had banished herself away from the house of Divine favor, yet the Lord devised means for restoring her and she was restored! Thus much on her remarkable experience.

II. Now, I want you to notice HER DEVOUT ACKNOWLEDGMENT. When that which we have described happened to her, she acknowledged the living God. My text says, "She called the name of the Lord that spoke unto her, YouAre-the-God-Who-Sees." She spoke to Him that spoke to her–after this fashion do we all begin our communion with God. Oh, when God speaks to you, you will soon find a tongue to speak to Him! I do

not mean when I speak to you in His name–for what am I? You ought to hear us if we truly speak for God, since it is of His kindness that He sends His servants to speak to you. But if the Covenant Angel comes, Himself, and if He speaks to the heart, then He unstops the deaf ears and loosens the dumb tongue. Men soon speak to Christ when Christ speaks to them! Did you but know the power of the Almighty Word of Grace, you would understand that as darkness gave place to light when He said, "Let there be light," so do men's hearts quit their sin when Jesus speaks to them in tones of effectual Grace. Hagar knew no speaking to God till God spoke with her, but after He had spoken to her, there was no silence!

What did she say? She acknowledged Him to be God. "She called the name of the Lord that spoke to her, You-Arethe-God-Who-Sees." It is one thing to believe there is a God, but it is quite another thing to know it by coming into personal contact with Him! They give you books to prove that there is a God–all well and good–be convinced by them. They tell you to walk abroad and see God in His works. Do so. You cannot better employ yourselves, for God is everywhere. His breath perfumes the flowers and His pencil paints them. But you will not learn God in this fashion if you use this method by itself. To go from Nature up to Nature's God is a long step for broken legs–we are so mangled by the Fall that we never take that step without Divine help. But, oh, if the Lord meets

with you! If He reveals Himself to your heart! What assurance! What certainty!

Think not I am talking, now, of things that are not–I speak what I, myself, have felt. God has met with some of us as surely as ever one spirit has met with another! Men have so spoken to us at times that we can never forget their speech, but never has human voice come with such force as that of the Lord of Hosts, the accents of whose Words we shall hear as long as memory holds her place and reason sits on her throne! We may forget the words of father, mother, wife, or friend, but not the voice of the God of Love! "When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek." None doubt the existence of God when God has come into contact with their spirit. When we have felt His power and tasted His love–and known His overwhelming influence–then have we said, "Jehovah, He is the God," and we have bowed in solemn worship before Him!

I do not know that Hagar had ever thought of God before, but she discerns Him now and speaks wisely. No doubt she had heard of Jehovah, for she had joined in the devotions of Abraham's family, but now, for the first time in her life, she recognizes in deed and of a truth that the Lord lives for her and, therefore, she speaks to Him and calls Him, "TheGod-Who-Sees."

Observe, dear Friends, that she acknowledged His observant love. She could not help acknowledging it, for it flashed before her eyes!

I do not think when she said, “You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees,” that she meant merely that God is Omniscient and therefore that He saw her, but she meant this, “You see me with a special observation. You see me with eyes of tender concern and loving care. You know me in my adversity.” She felt in her inmost soul that eyes of thoughtful love were fixed on her. “Hagar, Sarai’s maid,” knew that she was especially under watchful care. Those holy eyes had noticed all her sin which had been brought to her remembrance. Those eyes had seen her duty which she was now willing to resume. Those eyes had spied out the promise for her, which promise had brought a warm comfort to her poor, chilled spirit. “Oh,” she said, “what a God You are–the God-Who-Sees, who knows, who considers and thinks of me!” Now she has a God, not in theory, but in fact!

You that only know God as One who made the heavens and earth, do not, indeed, know Him at all. He must be personally a God to you, or He will not be your God at all. To us, the true God is the God who sees us. Does not His Law begin, “I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage”? His special care is the mark by which we know Him. It was so in Hagar’s case–God’s watchful care towards her made Him real to her. She knew that He must be God! She could not doubt it, for she had been so strangely found out by Him. In the extremity of her lost estate, when she had gone to the uttermost of

sin and sorrow, He had found her out and so she calls Him, “The-God-Who-Sees me.”

In the Presence of that God she felt overpowered and ready to yield. She was so overwhelmed that no rebellion remained within her. She girds her garments about her and she makes the best of her way home to the tent of Sarai. Her mistress is hard, but sin is harder. She will go back and bear the reproach and rebuke, for she has a promise hidden in her heart to sustain he. She shall yet be the glad mother of a father of nations who shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. She returns surrounded with God. Bathed in the sense of the Divine oversight, she resigns herself to her work. Though Abram should not encourage her and Sarai should not acknowledge her, yet the Lord’s eyes would be upon her and God’s favor was preparing great things for her. Her heart was light within her, because of the Divine favor, and in that spirit she was subdued unto the will of God.

That is what I want to happen to many a poor soul this morning in a still fuller and more spiritual sense. Pray, you people of God, that it may be so! If you are here, this morning, Mistress Sarah, let me put in a gentle word for your poor maid. If she does come back to you, do not treat her harshly again. Do not drive her away again, but receive the runaway and make the best of her. Let the past be buried. Say, “If an angel has appeared to you, and taught you to

know the Lord, I will gladly receive you and show the kindness of God unto you."

III. Let me now call to your notice THE MANIFEST AMAZEMENT of this woman, for in her glad surprise she uttered a sentence which runs as follows–"Have I, also, here looked after Him who sees me?" This is a sentence very hard to be understood. Not because it is hard to make out a meaning, but because it is so full of meaning! It reads like an oracle. Expositors will tell you that as many senses may be given to this sentence as there are words in it–and each one of these senses will bear a measure of decent defense. I shall not go into them all, but I think I see clearly that she was amazed that God should care for her. "You, God see me. Have I, also, here looked after Him who sees me?" Does He see me? Do I see Him? If I had loved God when I was in Sarai's tent, I could have understood His following me here. If I had sought Him when I was with Abram and had known my master's God in Canaan, I could have understood that He should remember me now. But I was a wild Egyptian! I would not bow my knee to Jehovah. No, I had no wish nor thought for the living God–yet has He looked after me, the slave girl for whom nobody cared? He has spoken to me concerning things to come."

Brethren, it is a great wonder to me, this day, that ever my God should think of me. Brothers, Sisters, do you not share that feeling,

each one for yourself? Do you not say, “Why me, my Lord? Why me”? Sit still in holy wonder and adore and bless the Lord!

I think her next amazement was that she should have been such a long time without ever thinking of Him who had thought so much of her. She says, “Have I also here looked unto Him who sees me?” “What? Have I been these years with Abraham and heard about the God who has been looking at me in love–and have I never glanced a thought to Him?” Her ungodliness astounds her! Brothers and Sisters, when you are brought to God, it will strike you as though a dart went through your flesh, that you should so long have done despite to God and heavenly things! Then will you say, “Have I forgotten Christ? Have I forgotten God? Has He had designs of love to me and purposes of Grace for me, and yet have I rebelled against Him? Did He die for me and did I refuse to live for Him? Did He bleed His life away on the Cross for me and have I been, all these years, thoughtless and careless of Him?”

It will stagger you! You will feel ready to sink into the dust when you once feel the folly and meanness of your course. You can bluster, you can be proud and careless when you know not God–but when you once fully meet with Him, you will be ready to bite your tongue to think you could have lived so long in ignorance and neglect of your God! Hagar was evidently startled as she remembered that she had never, up till that time, looked to the observing One.

But next, she is amazed still more to think that at last she does look unto God. In effect she cries, “What? Has it come to this? Have I, also, here looked after Him who sees me? Is Hagar at last converted? When I had bread to eat I never looked after God and now that I have come into this wilderness, do I seek and find Him? No creature can hear my call and do I now call upon my Creator? I am alone, alone, alone! There is nothing here but this well, and lo, the Angel of Jehovah has found me and spoken with me and now, in this wild place, I, for the first time, look after the Lord who has looked after me! Is this the place, the spot of ground where I must close in with my Maker and know that there is a God and believe His promise–and begin to live in expectation of its fulfillment?”

It might well astound her! Perhaps somebody has come into this service this very day, almost driven to desperation. You have acted so wrongly–I cannot tell how wrongly–and now you are smarting from the consequences of your foolishness. If God is meeting with you, this morning, you will cry out in astonishment, “What? Have I come here to find God? Have I come into this miserable condition that I might be driven to look after Him? This is surprising Grace!”

An old man in the country was a gracious father and brought up his children in the fear of the Lord–but his son, while yet a youth, must see life in London and, therefore, he came to the great city and plunged into all sorts of sin. He cared nothing for the Sabbath and even felt glad to escape from the weariness of the Meeting

House to which he had been taken from his infancy. It was no design of his to ever find God, but God found him in the most unlikely of all the places in the world, namely, in a low play-house. A scene occurred in which a mutinous sailor was to be hanged and, asking for a glass of spirits, he was represented as drinking to his own health in the words–"Here's to my immortal soul." "Immortal soul," thought the foolish youth, "Immortal soul!" He had almost forgotten that he had an immortal soul. It was a shot fired at the center of the target–it struck him home–he was ready to drop! He sought the open air and a place where to weep. The next Sabbath found the young scapegrace at a Prayer Meeting, seeking his father's God, and, before long he found peace through the blood of Jesus! He began preaching the Gospel which he had so grievously abused. God knows how to get at the heart of sinners!

Remember Colonel Gardiner about to commit a foul offense? He made an appointment and reached the spot an hour too soon. While he waited, he saw, or thought he saw, his Savior, and heard a voice accusing him of ingratitude. He fled the place of his temptation, sought pardon and became eminent as a saint. What a surprise it must be to rebels to be thus seized in the arms of Grace and transformed into friends of the King! I ask God that such a surprise may await souls who are here today! May you, also, inquire in amazement, "Have I here, also, looked after Him who sees me?"

One other surprise Hagar had, and that was the surprise to think that she was alive. It was the common conviction of that age that no man could see God and live. She knew that she had seen Him in angelic form and she marveled that she found herself alive and able to look up with hope. The awakened sinner, when he is met with by the God of Grace, wonders that he has not been cut down as a cumberer of the ground! If the Lord had met with me in a way of vengeance and caused me to wither away from the root like the fruitless fig tree, I could not have wondered–but to bless me in infinite compassion is a wonder, indeed! If He had sentenced me to depart to the lowest Hell, I could not have complained. But to meet me in love–to pardon, relieve and save me–this is a miracle of Grace! Does the Lord say, "I receive you to My heart, and I intend to bless you from now on and forever"? Then does He act like a God! Who but He would speak thus? His Grace awakens an amazement which is not soon forgotten or easily expressed. The soul cries in surprise and delight–

"Depth of mercy, can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God His wrath forbear?
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?
I have long withstood His Grace,
Long provoked Him to His face.
Tell it unto sinners, tell,

I am, I am out of Hell!”

IV. My time has fled, or I should have asked you to notice HER HUMBLE WORSHIP. Her humble worship wasexpressed by her using an expressive name for the Angel of the Lord. She worshipped God heartily and intelligently, according to her knowledge. She did not use the first word that came to hand, but she spoke fitly, thoughtfully and well. She knew that the Lord was the seeing God, for He had seen her, and so she worshipped Him under that title, “You-Are-theGod-Who-Sees.” We cannot worship “The Unknown God”–at least, such worship lacks eyes and light and is fitter for owls and bats than for man.

Yet be it observed that she worshipped beyond her knowledge, according to her apprehension, for she said, “Have I here also looked after Him?” As if she knew that she had not fully seen the Lord, but had only looked at Him as He retreated from her. Like Moses, in a later day, she had only beheld the back parts of God, the skirts of His garments–His face she had not seen. The Hebrew has that force. Hagar felt there was much more of God than she had seen and, in that belief, she worshipped and adored with lowliest reverence.

Her worship was wonderfully personal. It is not “God sees,” but “You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees.” And it is not, “Has God looked after His creature?” but, “Have I here, also, looked after Him who sees me?” True religion is always personal, but it becomes

wonderfully so when a man is specially arrested by Sovereign Grace, for then he adores as if he were the only man in the universe and beholds God as if no other eyes throughout all the ages had ever beheld Him. Oh, it is wonderful to feel alone with the Lord, while the Lord is searching you through and through!

Remark, again, that her worship proved itself deeply true, for it was followed by immediate practical obedience to the command of the Lord. Obedience is the best of worship! She returned to her mistress and was subject to her. Oh for Grace, this morning, if God meets with us, not to tarry a single minute in rebellion, but to return at once to subjection to the Lord! Oh, to cry with Thomas, "My Lord and my God," and then to live as in His sight! It were well to keep the finger forever in the print of the nails, that we might never lose our fellowship with Jesus, nor our joy in the great Father, nor our subjection to the ever-blessed Spirit of all Grace.

We will conclude by glancing, for an instant, at the well which became THE SUGGESTIVE MEMORIAL of this special manifestation and singular experience. That well–we do not know what it had been called before–but that beer, or well, was henceforth called Beer-Lahai-Roi, or, The Well-of-Him-Who-Lives-and-Sees. Will we not all, at this time, drink of that well? It was a very happy thought to attach a holy name to a well, so that every traveler might learn of God as he refreshed himself. When a person comes to drink at certain fountains, he reads "Drink, gentle

traveler, drink and pray." The inscription is most suitable. It is fit that men should pray when they receive so precious a refreshment as pure water. It was specially meet that travelers should henceforth and forever pray at a spot where the Lord, Himself, had been and had called to Himself a wanderer who had felt compelled to cry, "God lives and God sees."

Brothers and Sisters, there is a God and we know it. He is not an abstraction far away, but He is a reality and sees and observes–and takes care of men and women. Many of us have proven this to be a fact. Now next time you eat, worship Him that lives and sees! Next time you drink, worship Him that lives and sees! Let our tables and our wells remind us of Him who removes our hunger and quenches our thirst.

Better still, let this very name of God–"The Living and The Seeing One"–be as a well of water to you for the comfort of your hearts. By this may your griefs be assuaged. "Mother is dead!" What a loss is the death of a mother to many a girl and to many a young man! "Mother is dead" is the token of temptation without defense. Such a stay and holdfast, Mother often is, that when she is gone, Satan gets a dire advantage over a young soul. Yet if Mother is gone, the Lord lives–and all the gentleness and kindness of a mother are treasured up in Him! God lives–think of that and be comforted. This well is never dry. Your father is dead, or your dear, kind brother is dead and you are left alone to bear the buffetings of

a cruel world. Never mind. Let not your heart fail you. Do not run away. God lives and sees. He in whom is all fatherhood, all friendship and all kindness, still stands near you, watching for your good. Come and drink at this well! The waters are cool and clear. Drink and live!

Did I hear you cry out in anguish, "Nobody cares for me"? Do you say, "Nobody knows me in this terrible city. Here I am in this great London as much deserted as Robinson Crusoe on his lone island"? I know what you mean. London is worse than a wilderness to many. A man may lay himself down and die in these streets and nobody will care for him. The millions will pass him by–not for lack of kindness, but from lack of thought! There is no such horrible wilderness as a wilderness of men. Yet, take comfort–the living God sees you! He sees not as man sees, with a mere gaze of cold notice, but His heart goes with His eyes. You have not prayed yet, but He hears your affliction. Oh, begin to pray and He will speedily deliver! Spread your case before Him and He will regard your petition!

I would encourage you to get alone, if you are in sorrow and sin, and tell it all out before God and see if He does not deliver you. Some of us have gone to Him in plights as terrible as yours and we have ordered our cases before Him–and He has answered us. We can truly say, "He has delivered us" and, therefore, we encourage you to seek His face in the same manner. May the Lord bring you

to seek Him at once, for His great love's sake, and then to Him shall be Glory forever and ever. Amen.

Ge 17:1 • Consecration to God — Illustrated by Abram's Circumcision

SERMON 0845

Consecration To God—Illustrated By Abraham's Circumcision

"And when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be you perfect. And I will make My Covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly."

Genesis 17:1-2

WE COMMENCED our exposition of the life of Abram with his calling, when he was brought out of Ur of the Chaldeans and separated unto the Lord in Canaan. We then passed on to his justification, when he believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And now you will bear with us if we continue in the

same subject to a further stage and attempt to describe the fuller development of Abram's vital godliness in the open and clear revelation of his consecration to God.

In the chapter before us we see his sanctification unto the Lord, his ordination to service and purification as a vessel fitted for the Master's use. All the called are justified, and all the justified are, by a work of the Holy Spirit, sanctified and made meet to be afterwards glorified with Christ Jesus. Let me remind you of the order in which these blessings come. If we should speak of sanctification or consecration, it is not as a first thing, but as an elevation to be reached only by preceding steppingstones.

In vain do men pretend to be consecrated to God before they are called of God's Spirit. Such have yet to be taught that no strength of nature can suffice to serve the Lord aright. They must learn what this means, "You must be bornagain," for assuredly until men are brought into spiritual life by effectual calling of the Holy Spirit, all their talk about serving God may be answered in the words of Joshua, "You cannot serve the Lord." I speak of consecration, but it is not as a first thing, nor even as a second thing–for a man must be justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus–or he will not possess the Divine Grace which is the root of all true sanctity.

Sanctification grows out of faith in Jesus Christ. Remember, holiness is a flower, not a root–it is not sanctification that saves, but salvation that sanctifies. A man is not saved by his holiness–he

becomes holy because he is already saved. Being justified by faith, and having peace with God, he walks no longer after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and in the power of the blessing which he has received by Grace he dedicates himself to the service of his gracious God. Note, then, the due order of heavenly benefits–consecration to God follows calling and justification.

Recalling your minds to Abram's history, let me remind you that 13 years had elapsed after the time in which God had said that Abram's faith was counted to him for righteousness. And those 13 years, as far as we can gather from Scripture, were not at all so full of brave faith and noble deeds as we might have expected them to have been. How sure is that truth that the best of men are but men at the best–for that very man who had accepted God's promise and had not staggered at it through unbelief, within a few months afterwards, or perhaps a few days–was taken with a fit of unbelief! And at the instigation of his wife, Abram adopted means which were not justifiable, in order that he might obtain the promised heir.

He used means which may not be so vicious to him as they would be in men of modern times, but which were suggested by an unbelieving policy and were fraught with evil. He takes Hagar to wife. He could not leave it to God to give him the promised Seed. He could not leave it with God to fulfill His promise in His own time, but justifies himself in turning aside from the narrow path of faith to accomplish, by doubtful methods, the end which God

Himself had promised and undertaken to accomplish! How shorn of splendor is Abram seen when we read of him, “and Abram hearkened unto the voice of Sarai!” That business of Hagar is to the Patriarch’s deep discredit and reflects no honor at all upon either him or his faith. Look at the consequences of his unbelieving! Misery soon followed. Hagar despises her mistress. Sarai throws all theblame on her husband. The poor bondwoman is so harshly dealt with that she flees from the household. How much of real cruelty may be meant by the term “dealing harshly,” I cannot tell, but one marvels that such a man as Abram allowed one who had been brought into such a relationship with him to be heedlessly chased from his house while in a condition requiring care and kindness!

We admire the truthfulness of the Holy Spirit that He has been pleased to record the faults of the saints without extenuating them. Biographies of good men in Scripture are written with unflinching integrity–their evil recorded as well as their good. These faults are not written that we may say, “Abraham did so-and-so, therefore we may do it.” No, Brothers and Sisters, the lives of these good men are warnings to us as well as examples, and we are to judge them as we should judge ourselves–by the laws of right and wrong.

Abram did wrong both in taking Hagar to wife and in allowing her to be so badly used. In after years the child of the bondwoman mocked the child of the free woman, and an expulsion of both mother and child was necessary. There was deep sorrow in Abram’s

heart, a bitterness not to be told. Polygamy, though tolerated under the Old Testament, was never approved–it was only endured because of the hardness of men's hearts. It is evil, only evil, and that continually! In the family relationship there can be opened no more abundant and fruitful source of misery to the sons of men than lack of chastity to the marriage bond made with one wife–disguise that unchastity by what name you will.

All these 13 years, so far as Scripture informs us, Abram had not a single visit from his God. We do not find any record of his either doing anything memorable or having so much as a single audience with the Most High. Learn from this that if we once forsake the track of simple faith, once cease to walk according to the purity which faith approves, we strew our path with thorns, cause God to withhold the light of His countenance from us and pierce ourselves through with many sorrows.

But mark, Beloved, the exceeding Grace of God. The way to recover Abram from his backsliding was that the Lord should appear to him, and, consequently, we read in our text that at 99 years of age Abram was favored with a further visit from the Most High. This brings to my remembrance the words in the book of Revelation concerning the Church in Laodicea: "You are neither cold nor hot: I would you were cold or hot. So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth"–a very solemn declaration. But what follows? "Behold, I

stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me," which means just this–that for recovery out of a horrible state of languishing and lukewarmness there is no remedy but the coming of Jesus Christ to the soul in near and dear communion!

Truly it was so with Abram. The Lord would bring him out of his state of distrust and distance into one of high dignity and sanctity–and He does it by manifesting Himself to him, for the Lord talked with Abram–

"Midst darkest shades, if He appears,
My dawning is begun.
He is my soul's bright morning star,
And He my rising sun."

Breathe a prayer, my Brothers and Sisters–"Lord, reveal Yourself to my poor backsliding, languishing spirit. Revive me, O Lord, for one smile from You can make my wilderness blossom as the rose." On the occasion of this gracious manifestation, God was pleased to do for Abram what I think is to us an admirable and instructive illustration of the consecration of our redeemed spirits entirely to His service.

I shall, this morning, as God may help me, first lead you to observe the model of the consecrated life. Secondly, the nature of the higher life. And thirdly, its results.

First, then, let us notice in the words of God to Abram THE MODEL OF THE SANCTIFIED OR CONSECRATED LIFE. Here it is: “I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be you perfect.” For a man to be thoroughly sanctified to the Master’s service, he must first realize the almightiness and all-sufficiency and glory of God. Brethren, the God whom we serve fills all things and has all power and all riches. If we think little of Him, we shall render little trust to Him and consequently little obedience. But if we have grand conceptions of the glory of God, we shall learn to confide in Him most thoroughly. We shall receive mercies from Him most plentifully, and we shall be moved to serve Him most consistently.

Sin, at the bottom of it, very frequently has its origin in low thoughts of God. Take Abram’s sin–he could not see how God could make him the father of many nations when Sarai was old and barren. Hence his error with Hagar. But if he had remembered what God now brings to his recollection, that God is El Shaddai, the All-Sufficient One, he would have said, “No, I will remain true to Sarai, for God can effect His own purposes without my taking tortuous means to accomplish them. He is All-Sufficient in Himself, and not dependent upon creature strength. I will patiently hope, and quietly wait to see the fulfillment of the Master’s promises.”

Now, as with Abram, so with you, my Brothers and Sisters. When a man is in business difficulties, if he believes that God is All-Sufficient to carry him through them, he will not practice any of the common tricks of trade nor degenerate into that shiftiness which is so usual among commercial men. If a man believes, being poor, that God is sufficient portion for him, he will not grow envious of the rich or discontented with his condition. The man who feels that God is an allsufficient portion for his spirit will not look for pleasure in the pursuits of vanity. He will not go with the giddy multitude after their vain mirth. "No," says he, "God has appeared unto me as God All-Sufficient for my comfort and my joy. I am content so long as God is mine. Let others drink from broken cisterns if they will–I dwell by the overflowing fountain, and am perfectly content."

O Beloved, what glorious names our Lord deservedly wears! Whichever of His names you choose to dwell upon for a moment, what a mine of wealth and meaning it opens up to you! Here is this name, "El Shaddai." "El," that is, "The Strong One," for infinite power dwells in Jehovah. How readily may we who are weak become mighty if we draw upon Him! And then, "Shaddai," that is to say, "The Unchangeable, The Invincible." What a God we have, then, who knows no variableness, neither shadow of turning, against whom none can stand! "El," strong. "Shaddai," unchangeable in His strength–therefore always strong in every time

of need–ready to defend His people and able to preserve them from all their foes.

Come, Christian, with such a God as this why need you abase yourself to win the good word of the wicked man? Why gad about to find earthly pleasures where the roses are always mixed with thorns? Why need you to put your confidence in gold and silver, or in the strength of your body, or in anything that is beneath the moon? You have El Shaddai to be yours! Your power to be holy will much depend upon your grasping with all the intensity of your faith the cheering fact that this God is your God forever and ever! He is your daily portion, your all-sufficient consolation. You dare not, can not, will not wander into the ways of sin when you know that such a God is your Shepherd and Guide!

Following up this model of the consecrated life, notice the next words–"walk before Me." This is the style of life which characterizes true holiness. It is a walking before God. Ah! Brethren, Abram had walked before Sarai–he had paid undue respect to her views and wishes. He had walked, too, in the sight of his own eyes and the inclinations of his own heart when he was allied to Hagar. But now the Lord gently rebukes him with the exhortation, "Walk before Me." It is remarkable that on the former Divine visit to the Patriarch (which we tried to interpret last Lord's-Day), the Lord's message was, "Fear not."

Abram was then, as it were, but a child in spiritual things, and the Lord gave him comfort, for he needed it. He is now grown into a man and the exhortation is practical and full of activity–"walk." The Christian man is to put out and use the strength and Grace which he has received. The gist of the exhortation lies in the last words, "Walk before Me," by which I understand an habitual sense of the Presence of God, or doing the right thing and shunning the wrong out of respect to the will of God–a consideration of God in all actions–public and private. Brethren, I deeply regret when I see Christian men, even in religious societies, in their calculations leaving out the greatest item in the whole calculation–namely, the Divine element, the Divine power and faithfulness.

Of the most of mankind I may say, without being censorious, that if there were no God, their course of action would not be different from what it is, for they do not feel themselves either restrained or constrained by any sense of the Divine Presence. "The transgression of the wicked says within my heart that there is no fear of God before his eyes." But this is the mark of the truly sanctified man of God–that he lives in every place as standing in the presence chamber of the Divine Majesty. He acts as knowing that the eyes which never sleep are always fixed on him. His heart's desire is that he may never do the wrong thing–not because he has respect to worldly greatness–and may never forget the right thing–not because he is in evil company–but because God, being

everywhere, he is always in company where it would be impudent rebellion to sin. The saint feels that he must not, dare not transgress because he is before the very face of God! This is the model of the sanctified character–for a man to realize what the Lord is–and then to act as in the immediate Presence of a holy and jealous God.

The next words are, "and be you perfect." Brethren, does this mean absolute perfection? I shall not controvert the belief of some that we may be absolutely perfect on earth. Freely do I admit that the model of sanctification is perfection. It were inconsistent with the Character of God for Him to give us any other than a perfect command and a perfect standard. No law but that of absolute perfection could come from a perfect God–to give us a model that were not absolutely perfect were to ensure to us superabundant imperfections–and to give us an excuse for them. God sets before His servants no rule of–"Be as good as you can," but this–"Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

Has any man ever attained to it? Truly we have not, but for all that, every Christian man aims at it. I would far rather my child had a perfect copy to write by, though he might never write equal to it, than that he should have an imperfect copy set before him–because then he would never make a good writer at all. Our heavenly Father has given us the perfect image of Christ to be our example! He has given His perfect Law to be our rule, and it is for us to aim at this perfection in the power of the Holy Spirit, and, like Abram, to fall

upon our faces in shame and confusion of face when we remember how far we have come short of it. Perfection is what we wish for, pant after, and shall at the last obtain.

We do not want to have the Law toned down to our weakness. Blessed be God, we delight in the perfection of that Law. We say with Paul, "The Law is holy, and just, and good, but I am carnal, sold under sin." The will of God is that which we would be conformed, and if we who are Believers had but one wish, and it could be granted to us at once, it should be this–to make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight.

However, the word, "perfect," as I have said, bears commonly the meaning of "upright," or "sincere"–"walk before Me, and be sincere." No double dealing must the Christian man have. No playing fast and loose with God or man. No hypocritical professions, or false principles. He must be as transparent as glass. He must be a man in whom there is no guile. He must be a man who has cast aside deceit in every shape–who hates it, and loathes it. He must walk before God, who sees all things, with absolute sincerity, earnestly desiring in all things, both great and small, to commend himself to the conscience of others as in the sight of the Most High.

Brothers and Sisters, here is the model of the consecrated life! Do you long to attain it? I am sure every soul that is moved by God's

Grace does. But if your feeling about it is like mine, it will be just that of Abram in the text, “Abram fell on his face before the Lord.” For oh, how far short we have come of this! We have not always thought of God as AllSufficient. We have been unbelieving. We have doubted Him here, and doubted Him there. We have not gone to work in this world as if we believed the promise, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” We have not been satisfied to suffer, or to be poor–and we have not been content to do His will without asking questions.

We might often have had addressed to us the rebuke, “Is the Lord’s hand waxed short? Is His arm shortened at all? Is His ear heavy that He cannot hear?” Brethren, we have not always walked before the Lord! If one may speak for the rest, we do not always feel the Presence of God as a check to us. There are angry words, perhaps, at the table. There is wrongdoing in the place of business. There are carelessness, worldliness, pride, and I know not what beside of evil to mar the day’s labor. And when we come back at night we have to confess, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep. I have forgotten my Shepherd’s Presence. I have not always spoken and acted as if I felt that You were always looking upon me.”

Thus it has come to pass that we have not been perfect. I feel ready to laugh, not the laugh of Abram, but that of thorough ridicule when I hear people talk about their being absolutely perfect. They must be of very different flesh and blood from us–or

rather they must be great fools full of conceit, and utterly ignorant of themselves–for if they did but look at a single action they would find specks in it. And if they examined but one single day they would perceive something in which they fell short, if there were nothing in which they had transgressed.

You see your model, Brethren. Study it in the life of Christ and then press forward to it with the zeal of the Apostle who said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

II. Secondly, THE NATURE OF THIS CONSECRATION as illustrated in this chapter. On each point briefly. Genuine spiritual consecration begins with communion with God. Note the third verse–"Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him." By looking at Christ Jesus, His image is photographed upon our mind and we are changed from glory to glory, as by the Presence of the Lord. Distance from God's Presence always means sin–holy familiarity with God engenders holiness. The more you think of God. The more you meditate upon His works. The more you praise Him. The more you pray to Him. The more constantly you talk

with Him, and He with you, by the Holy Spirit, the more surely are you upon the road to thorough consecration to His cause!

The next point in the nature of this consecration is that it is fostered by enlarged views of the Covenant of Grace. Read on: "As for Me, behold My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations." This is said to help Abram to walk before God and to be perfect, from which we conclude that to grow in sanctification a man should increase in knowledge, and also in the tenacity of the faith which grasps the Covenant which God has made with Christ for His people which is, "Ordered in all things and sure."

With your Bibles open, notice attentively that Abram was refreshed as to his own personal interest in the Covenant. Note the second personal pronoun, how it is repeated: "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations." Take the sixth verse, "I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come out of you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and your seed after you…to be a God unto you, and to your seed after you."

Thus Abram has the Covenant brought home to himself. He is made to feel that he has a part and a lot therein. If you are ever to be sanctified unto God's service, you must get a full assurance of your interest in all the Covenant provisions! Doubts are like wild

boars of the forest which tear up the flowers of sanctification in the garden of the heart. But when you have in your soul a God-given assurance of your interest in the precious blood of Jesus Christ, then shall the foxes which spoil the vines be hunted to death and your tender grapes shall give a good smell. Cry to God, beloved Brothers and Sisters, for strong faith to, "Read your title clear to mansions in the skies." Great holiness must spring from great faith! Faith is the root, obedience the branch–and if the root decays the branch cannot flourish.

Ask to know that Christ is yours, and that you are His–for here you will find a fountain to water your consecration and make it yield fruit to Christ's service. Some professors act as if this were not the case. They foment their doubts and fears in order to perfect holiness. I have known Christians, when they are conscious that they have not lived as they ought to live, begin to doubt their interest in Christ, and, as they say, humble themselves in order to reach after fuller sanctification of life. That is to say, they starve themselves in order to grow strong! They throw their gold out of the window in order to become rich! They pull up the very foundation of their house to make it stand secure!

Beloved Believer, sinner as you are, backslider as you are, believe in Jesus–let not a sense of sin weaken your faith in Him. He died for sinners–"in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Cling to that Cross–the more furious the storm the more need of the life-buoy–

never leave it, but make your hold firmer! Confide alone in the virtue of that precious blood, for thus only will you slay your sins and advance in holiness. If you say within your heart, “Jesus cannot save such a one as I am. If I had marks and evidences of being God’s child, I could then trust in the reward”–you have cast away your shield and the darts of the tempter will wound you terribly!

Cling to Jesus even when it is a question of whether you have a grain of Divine Grace in your hearts! Believe that He died for you, not because you are consecrated or sanctified, but died for you as sinners, and saves you as sinners. Never lose your simple trust in the Crucified, for only by the blood of the Lamb can you overcome sin and be made fit for the Lord’s work.

Note, in reading these words, how this Covenant is revealed to Abram peculiarly as a work of Divine power. Note the run of the passage, “I will make My covenant between Me and you.” “I will make you fruitful.” “I will establish My covenant.” “I will give unto you.” “I will be your God,” and so on. Oh, those glorious “wills” and “shalls.” Brethren, you cannot serve the Lord with a perfect heart until first your faith gets a grip of the Divine “will” and “shall.” If my salvation rests upon this poor, puny arm–upon my resolves, my integrity, and my faithfulness–it is shipwrecked forever!

But if my eternal salvation rests upon the great arm which bears up the universe. If my soul’s safety is altogether in that hands that

wheel the stars along–then blessed be His name–it is safe and well, and now, out of love to such a Savior, I will serve Him with all my heart! I will spend and be spent for Him who has thus graciously undertaken for me. Mark this, Brothers and Sisters. Be very clear about it, and ask to have the Divine working made apparent to your soul, for that will help you to be consecrated to God.

Further, Abraham had a view of the Covenant in its everlastingness. I do not remember that the word "everlasting" had been used before in reference to that Covenant, but in this chapter we have it over and over again. "I will establish My covenant for an everlasting covenant." Here is one of those grand Truths of God which many of the babes in Grace have not as yet learned, namely, that the blessings of Grace are blessings not given today to be taken back tomorrow, but eternal blessings. The salvation which is in Christ Jesus is not a salvation which will belong to us for a few hours while we are faithful to it, and will then be taken away so that we shall be left to perish. God forbid! "He is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent." "I am God," says He, "I change not: therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed.".

When we put ourselves into the hands of Christ we do not confide in a Savior who might suffer us to be destroyed, but we rest in One who has said, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Instead

of the doctrine of the security of the saints leading to negligence of life, you will find that, on the contrary, where it is thoroughly well received in the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, it begets such a holy confidence in God, such a flaming gratitude to Him that it is one of the best incentives to consecration! Treasure up these thoughts, dear Brothers and Sisters, and if you would grow in Divine Grace and in conformity to Christ, endeavor to perceive your personal interest in the Covenant, the Divine power which guarantees its fulfillment, and the everlastingness of its character.

In considering the nature of this consecration, I would observe, next, that they who are consecrated to God are regarded as new men. The new manhood is indicated by the change of name–he is called no longer Abram, but Abraham–and his wife is no longer Sarai, but Sarah. You, Beloved, are new creatures in Christ Jesus. The root and source of all consecration to God lies in regeneration. We are "born-again"–a new and incorruptible seed is placed within us which "lives and abides forever." The name of Christ is named upon us–we are no longer called sinners and unjust, but we become the children of God by faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Note further that the nature of this consecration was set forth to Abraham by the rite of circumcision. It would not be at all fitting or decorous for us to enter into any detail as to that mysterious rite, but it will suffice to say that the rite of circumcision signified the taking away of the filthiness of the flesh. We have the Apostle

Paul's own interpretation of circumcision in the verses which we read just now in his Epistle to the Colossians. Circumcision indicated to the seed of Abraham that there was a defilement of the flesh in man which must forever be taken away or man would remain impure, and out of covenant with God.

Now, Beloved, there must be, in order to our sanctification to Christ, a giving up, a painful relinquishing of things as dear to us as right eyes and right hands. There must be a denying of the flesh with its affections and lusts. We must mortify our members. There must be self-denial if we are to enter into the service of God. The Holy Spirit must pass sentence of death and cutting away upon the passions and tendencies of corrupt humanity. Much must perish which nature would cherish–but die it must–because Divine Grace abhors it. Notice, with regard to circumcision, that it was peremptorily ordained that it should be practiced on every male of the race of Abraham, and if it were neglected, death followed. So the giving up of sin, the giving up of the body of the filth of the flesh is necessary to every Believer. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

Even the babe in Christ is as much to see death written upon the body of the filth of the flesh as a man who, like Abraham, has reached advanced years and come to maturity in spiritual things. There is no distinction, here, between the one and the other. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." And where a

supposed grace does not take away from us a love of sin, it is not the Grace of God at all, but the presumptuous conceit of our own vain natures. It is often said that the ordinance of Baptism is analogous to the ordinance of circumcision. I will not controvert that point, although the statement may be questioned.

But supposing it to be, let me urge upon every Believer here to see to it that in his own soul he realizes the spiritual meaning both of circumcision and Baptism, and then consider the outward rites–for the thing signified is vastly more important than the sign. Baptism sets forth far more than circumcision! Circumcision is putting away of the filth of the flesh, but Baptism is the burial of the flesh altogether! Baptism does not say, "Here is something to be taken away," but everything is dead and must be buried with Christ in His tomb, and the man must rise anew with Christ. Baptism teaches us that by death we pass into the new life. As Noah's ark, passing through the death of the old world, emerged into a new world, even so, by a like figure, Baptism sets forth our salvation by the resurrection of Christ–a Baptism of which Peter says, it is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God."

In Baptism, the man avows to himself and others that he comes by death into newness of life according to the words of the Holy Spirit, "Buried with Him in Baptism, in which also you are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised

Him from the dead." The most valuable point is the spiritual meaning, and on that we experience what it is to be dead to the world–to be dead and buried with Christ–and then to be risen with Him! Still, Brethren, Abraham was not allowed to say, "If I get the spiritual meaning, I can do without the outward rite." He might have objected to that rite on a thousand grounds a great deal more strongly than any which the hesitating have urged against Baptism–but he first accepted the rite, as well as the thing which it intended, and straightaway was circumcised!

And so I exhort you, Brothers and Sisters, to be obedient to the precept upon Baptism, as well as attentive to the Truth of God which it signifies. If you are, indeed, buried with Christ, and risen with Him, despise not the outward and instructive sign by which this is set forth.

"Well," says one, "a difficulty suggests itself as to your views"–for an argument is often drawn from this chapter, "that inasmuch as Abraham must circumcise all his seed, we ought to baptize all our children." Now, observe the type and interpret it not according to prejudice, but according to Scripture. In the type the seed of Abraham are circumcised. You draw the inference that all typified by the seed of Abraham ought to be baptized, and I do not quibble at the conclusion. But I ask you, who are the true seed of Abraham? Paul answers in Romans 9:8–"They which are the children of the

flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

As many as believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, are Abraham's seed. Whether eight days old in Divine Grace, or more or less–every one of Abraham's seed has a right to Baptism. But I deny that the unregenerate, whether children or adults, are of the spiritual seed of Abraham. The Lord will, we trust, call many of them by His Grace–but as yet they are "heirs of wrath, even as others." At such time as the Spirit of God shall sow the good seed in their hearts, they are of Abraham's believing seed–but they are not so while they live in ungodliness and unbelief, or are as yet incapable of faith or repentance.

The answering person in type to the seed of Abraham is, by the confession of everybody, the Believer. And the Believer ought, seeing he is buried with Christ spiritually, to prove that fact by his public Baptism in water, according to the Savior's own precept and example. "Thus," said Christ, "it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness," as He went down to the river Jordan. At the Jordan was He sprinkled? Why go down to a river to be sprinkled? Why went He down into the water to be sprinkled? "Us." Did He mean babes? Was He a babe? Was not He, when He said "us," speaking of the faithful who are in Him? "And thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness," that is, all His saints.

But how does Baptism fulfill all righteousness? Typically thus–It is the picture of the whole work of Christ. There is His immersion in suffering. There is His death and burial. There is His coming up out of the water representing His Resurrection. His coming up the banks of Jordan represents His Ascension. It is a typical representation of how He fulfilled all righteousness, and how the saints fulfilled it in Him.

But, Brothers and Sisters, I did not intend to go so far into the outward sign, because my soul's deepest desire is this, that as Abraham, by the outward sign, was taught that there was a putting away of the filth of flesh, which must be, or death must follow–so are we taught by Baptism that there is an actual death to the world, and a resurrection with Christ, which must be to every Believer, however old or however young–or he has not part or lot in the matter of consecration to God, or, indeed, in salvation itself!

III. I have a third head, but my time is gone, and, therefore, just these hints. THE RESULTS OF SUCH A CONSECRATION. Immediately after God's appearing to Abraham, his consecration was manifest, first, in his prayer for his family–"O that Ishmael might live before You!" Men of God, if you are indeed the Lord's, and feel that you are His, begin now to intercede for all who belong to you. Never be satisfied unless they are saved, too! And if you have a son, an Ishmael, concerning whom you have many fears and

much anxiety–as you are saved, yourself–never cease to groan out that cry, "O that Ishmael might live before You!"

The next result of Abraham's consecration was that he was most hospitable to his fellow men. Look at the next chapter. He sits at the tent door and three men come to him. The Christian is the best servant of humanity in a spiritual sense. I mean that for his Master's sake he endeavors to do good to the sons of men. He is, of all men, the first to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked–and as much as lies in him to do good unto all men–especially unto such as are of the household of faith. The third result was Abraham entertained the Lord, Himself, for among those three angels who came to his house was the King of kings, the Infinite One!

Every Believer who serves his God does, as it were, give refreshment to the Divine mind. I mean this–God took an infinite delight in the work of His dear Son. He said, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and He takes a delight, also, in the holiness of all His people. Jesus sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied by the works of the faithful. And you, Brothers and Sisters, as Abraham entertained the Lord, entertain the Lord Jesus with your patience and your faith–with your love and your zeal when you are thoroughly consecrated to Him. Once more, Abraham became the great intercessor for others.

The next chapter is full of his pleadings for Sodom. He had not been able to plead before, but after circumcision, after

consecration, he becomes the King's remembrancer–he is installed into the office of a priest, and he stands there crying, "Will You not save the city? Will you destroy the righteous with the wicked?" O Beloved, if we do but become consecrated to God, thoroughly so, as I have attempted feebly to describe, we shall become mighty with God in our pleadings. I believe one holy man is a greater blessing to a nation than a whole regiment of soldiers. Did not they fear, more, the prayers of John Knox than the arms of 10,000 men?

A man who lives habitually near to God is like a great cloud forever dropping with fertilizing showers. This is the man who can say, "The earth is dissolved, I bear up the pillars thereof." France had never seen so bloody a revolution had there been men of prayer to preserve her. England, amidst the commotions which make her rock to and fro, is held fast because prayer is put up incessantly by the faithful. The flag of old England is nailed to her mast–not by the hands of her sailors–but by the prayers of the people of God! These, as they intercede day and night, and as they go about their spiritual ministry–these are they for whom God spares nations–for whom He permits the earth to still exist!

And when their time is over and they are taken away, the salt being taken from the earth, then shall the elements dissolve with fervent heat–the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up–but not until He has caught away the saints with Christ into the air shall this world pass away. He will spare it for the

righteous' sake. Seek after the highest degree of sanctity, my dear Brothers and Sisters, seek for it, labor for it! And while you rest in faith, alone, for justification, be not slack concerning growth in Divine Grace, that the highest attainments be your ambition, and God grant them to you, for His Son’s sake. Amen. Portions of Scripture read before sermon–Genesis 17 and Colossians 2:10-15.

Ge 17:1 • The Life, Walk, and Triumph of Faith

SERMON 1082

T*he Life, Walk And Triumph Of Faith*

"And when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be you perfect. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly."

Genesis 17:1, 2

BELOVED, all Scripture is the Word of God but some Scripture is expressly so. Much of its teaching comes through inspired men but some of it was spoken by God's own mouth, directly and without instrumentality. Such are the Words now before us which were of old spoken to Abram by the Almighty God. These sentences ought for this reason to be regarded with peculiar

reverence and considered with double attention. The glow of Divinity is fresh upon the lines–bend, then, your souls to the understanding of them.

If a letter were written to you when you were far from home, you would value every line of it. If your fond mother had asked a friend to write it in her name and had dictated the expressions which he should employ–and if there were inserted in the body of the letter several sentences with this preface, "and your mother expressly says"–then you would treasure up the exact words and repeat them to yourself again and again, would you not? All God's Words in Scripture are pearls, but this is one of the fairest of them! They are all diamonds, but such Words as God speaks from His own mouth I may call the crown jewels of Scripture!

Look, then, at the text. We will read it again: "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be you perfect. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." Happy was Abram to have such intimate communion with God! These sacred visits were the grand events of his life. But we need not envy him, for God has appeared unto us in a yet more glorious manner and the appearance is abiding. Behold, in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ the tabernacle of God is among men and He does dwell among them!

And, in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit the Believer has obtained an intimacy with God which none of the older dispensation attained. The Lord was to the former saints as a wayfaring man who tarried but for a night–but it is our privilege to pray, "Abide with us," and our joy to know that wherever two or three are met together in the name of our Lord, He is there and will manifest Himself unto them. Permit me, therefore, to encourage you to pray that the Words of the Lord to Abram may be Words for you, pressed home upon your own spirit and sounded in your souls with power, as from the lips of the Lord Himself!

Then shall our meditations be sweet, indeed, and we shall be blessed with faithful Abraham. O, Spirit Divine, make it so, we entreat You!

The first thing we shall speak about, upon this occasion, is SURE RELIANCE. The foundation of it is laid before us in the text. True confidence leans alone upon God who declares Himself to be Almighty God, or God All-Sufficient–for such is an equally correct rendering of the passage. All true faith hangs upon God, as the vessel upon the nail. Strong faith realizes the all-sufficiency of God and that is the secret of its strength, the hidden manna on which it feeds and becomes vigorous.

The Lord is all-sufficient in power to accomplish His own purposes. He is all-sufficient in wisdom to find His own way through difficulties which to us may appear to be like a maze, but

which to Him are plain enough. And He is allsufficient in love so that He will never fail us for lack of mercy in His heart or pity in His bosom. God is God AllSufficient! Simple as that Truth is for us to speak and for you to hear, it is a deep, unfathomable mystery and did we really grasp its Truth and dwell upon it, it would have a very wonderful effect upon our whole conduct.

Remember that Abram was 99 years old and as yet had no child by his wife Sarah–yet he had received a promise from God that there should be a seed which should spring out of his loins. He was long past the natural term of life in which it was likely that he would be the father of a son. So, also, was it with his wife Sarah. Abram, for a while overcome by unbelief, thought it best to take to himself, at the suggestion of his wife Sarah, her handmaid Hagar. And now, for some few years, Abram had possessed a son named Ishmael and it is probable that he thought that this son would answer God's promise and that somehow or other the blessing would come through him.

But the Lord had not so determined. He took no pleasure in the carnal policy which led to Ishmael's birth. The Lord meant the language before us to be a gentle but unmistakable rebuke for Abram, for He said in effect, "I am God AllSufficient–quite sufficient to fulfill My own purposes without your help–quite able to achieve My own denials without such a questionable expedient as that of Hagar and her son Ishmael." That is, no doubt, the Divine

intent in the declaration of all-sufficiency. Hear, then, these words if you, also, have been at any time distrustful–and let them sink into your souls–"I am God All-Sufficient."

If any of you are tempted, at this time, to do what is questionable because you cannot see how God's promise to you will be effected without it, the Lord tells you He needs no help of yours to achieve His own designs! "I am God Almighty," He says. "Is anything too hard for Me? Do you think I need your wisdom to set Me right, or your puny arm to strengthen Me? Do I need help to achieve My purposes which stand fast as My eternal Throne?" It was a tender rebuke of Abram's very gross mistake and it is to us a hint that we are never to put forth our hand unto iniquity, or to do anything that is doubtful in any shape or form under the notion that we are thus effecting the purposes of God.

Look at Rebekah. She little understood the all-sufficiency of God. God had promised her that Jacob should have the covenant-blessing, but she seems to think that God cannot keep His Word and cause Jacob to inherit the promises unless she has a finger in it! Father Isaac has sent Esau out to hunt–to bring home savory meat–and has promised that he will give Esau the blessing when he returns. And now Rebekah thinks God will be defeated! The anxious mother imagines the Most High to be in a dilemma and His purposes to be likely to fail unless her inherited craftiness can devise a stratagem to eke out the Divine Wisdom.

Rebekah must tell lies and Jacob must tell lies, too! And poor old Isaac must be deceived, or else God's purposes will not be accomplished! O foolish Rebekah! But before we speak and condemn that gracious woman, let us make sure that we confess and condemn the same tendency in ourselves! Have we not also dreamed that we might do evil that good might come? Have we not followed policy where we ought to have sternly adhered to principle and all this because we thought it necessary and feared that otherwise evil would triumph? Has not our judgment been bewildered by strange Providences and been led to sanction irregular procedures, or at least to think less severely of them?

Under the influence of blind unbelief have we not been ready, like Uzzah, to lay our hand upon the Ark of the Lord to steady it, for fear it should fall–as if God's Ark could not take care of itself without our sinful hand being laid on it? That lesson learned by Israel at the Red Sea is still a hard one for us–we cannot stand still and see the salvation of God! Because we do not believe in the Almighty God we are eager to make haste! We hurry, worry, fret, fuss and sin! Fear drives us and self-sufficiency draws us–and the noble quietude of faith in God is lost. O could we but rest in Omniscient Love! Could we but know the Lord and wait patiently for Him–how much sin and sorrow we should be spared!–

"With feeble light and half obscure,

Poor mortals Your arrangements view!

Not knowing that the least are sure,
And the mysterious just and true.
My favored soul shall meekly learn
To lay her reason at Your Throne.
Too weak Your secrets to discern,
I'll trust You for my Guide alone."

Here is the fit place to set in contrast the conduct of David. He knew that in God's decree it was ordained that he should be king over Israel yet he took no means to secure the crown. He would not lift his hand to strike Saul. No, he spared him when he was entirely in his power. He did not unbelievingly interfere to make a Providence for himself, but left the course of events in the Lord's hands–and in consequence, when he came to the throne he had an easy conscience and no innocent blood upon his hands. May our faith teach us the same patient waiting and confident repose of soul. May we believe, to see the Glory of the Lord. The Lord All-Sufficient will, in the end, clear the darkest Providences from all question and our souls shall know how happy are those who put their trust in the Lord alone!

This blessed text, "I am God All-Sufficient," may apply to us in times when we are inclined to shirk any service for God. Have you ever felt, in certain seasons, that God's choice of you for a special labor could not be a wise one for you were so unfit for it? Have you ever felt in your own hearts–"I cannot do that. I think the Lord

would have me do it, but I cannot. I have not the qualifications. I believe I am called to it but it is too difficult for me. I shall not be able to achieve it"?

Have you ever had the disposition, like Jonah, to flee to Tarshish, or somewhere else and to escape from Nineveh and its trials? Have you never pleaded, like Jeremiah, "But I am a child"? Have you never cried, like Moses, "I am slow of speech! Send whomever You will send, but not me"? Now, at such a time the Lord may well remind us, "I am God AllSufficient, cannot I strengthen you? Weak as you are, cannot I make you strong? Worm of the dust, cannot I make you thresh the mountains? Why do you fear? You are feeble, but I am not. You are foolish, but I am wise. Give yourself up to My guidance. Trust yourself in My hands and you shall achieve marvels! And exceedingly great wonders shall you accomplish by My power and Grace."

It will be sadly sinful if we arrogate to ourselves the right to arrange our own place and alter Heaven's appointments. We are not where we are by chance, or by a freak of fate–as God's servants our work is allotted us wisely and authoritatively. Dare we be wiser than the Lord? Are we also of Jehovah's council? His choice of instruments is wise even when He chooses the weak things of the world to work His purposes. Their insufficiency is of no consequence, for their sufficiency is of God! For them to attempt to shun their duty because of conscious feebleness would be a daring

sin against the prerogatives of the King of kings–an impious censure upon the infallible appointments of Infinite Wisdom!

May not this be a word in season to some Brother or Sister here who may happen to be under that temptation? If it is, may the Lord speak it home by His Spirit and a blessing will come of it! Work on, dear Friends, and wait on, for it is no business of yours to correct your Maker's arrangements. He who placed you where you now are knew what He was doing! Look at your infirmities with another eye. No longer allow them to distress you, but the rather glory in them because they afford room and space for the Divine power to rest in you and work by you. Listen no more to the wailings of your trembling flesh, which cries, "Alas, I am weak," but hear the voice of Him who says, "I am God Almighty."

This word may also be useful to those who are trembling under some present temporal trial and affliction. They are dreading what may yet happen. Forebodings of what may soon come are upon them. Sometimes we have before us a gloomy prospect–we know the trial must come and we are afraid of it–and though we have the promise, "In six troubles I will be with you, and in seven there shall no evil touch you," yet we stand trembling. "I am God AllSufficient"–will not that brace your nerves and enable you to press on, though through a valley as dark as death-shade itself?

Is it poverty? God is All-Sufficient to supply your needs. Is it physical pain?–and some of us dread that beyond anything else–the

All-Sufficient God can put under your aching head such a peace-creating pillow that in the sweetness of celestial love you shall forget the smarts of the flesh and your soul shall be comforted when your body is full of agony! Why, what is it that you fear, O child of God? There can be no lack which He cannot supply; no enemy that He cannot subdue! Slander's cruel tooth, does that dismay you? Is not the Lord sufficient for this, also?

"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper." Have you not His own word for it? "Every tongue that rises against you in judgment you shall condemn." Has not He declared it? And does not He know how to accomplish His own purpose? Therefore, I say again, cast your doubts and your fears to the wind, for God as surely says to you, O trembling Believer, as ever He did to His servant Abram, "I am God, Almighty God." O rest in the Lord and be not troubled! He shall, He must appear–only put not forth your hand unto iniquity and do nothing before the time. You have no feeble Deity to trust in–be not a coward, but play the man!

The same may also be applied to each of us when we are under spiritual depressions. Inward tribulations are frequently more severe than temporal trials. The man of God knows this full well. We look within and we see Divine Grace to be at a low ebb with us–at least we think so. Our corruptions and our natural depravity–these we see clearly enough and we are troubled with the sight. Neglect of duty, omissions of devotion, forgotten opportunities of

usefulness all come up and accuse us–and then we are ready to doubt whether we ever knew the Lord at all! And, perhaps Satan assails us at the same time and we fall under his foot for a while.

O, let us not, even in such terrible times, ever doubt our God, for He is All-Sufficient still! If our salvation depended upon ourselves, it would soon be all over with us. But since it depends upon that arm, the sinews of which can never break–since it depends upon that heart which can never change and never cease to beat with Omnipotent Love–why should we be discouraged? "I am God Almighty," says the Lord, "Therefore say you unto the enemy, 'Rejoice not over me, for though I fall yet shall I rise again.'"

And suppose, Beloved, you should have temporal troubles and spiritual distresses at the same time? This meeting of two seas is very apt to make the mariner expect immediate shipwreck. But, behold, walking on the waters comes your God to you, saying, "I am God All-Sufficient even for you." Was there ever a storm that was not of His brewing? Therefore cannot He control it? Was there ever spirit that came up out of the deeps of Hell that was not of His loosing?–and can He not hold him in as with a chain and restrain his malignant power? Behold, Jehovah rides upon the wings of the wind and the storm-cloud is His car! Fear not, therefore, the rattling of the wheels on which your heavenly Father rides!

In the midst of the tempest He reigns supreme! Fear not the darkness which is His canopy, or the lightning which is but the

glance of His eyes. Trust Him as all times and let no fear cast you down or hurry you into an unbelieving and restless course of action which would defile you and bring dishonor upon His blessed name. Yes, if there are signs about you of approaching departure–if your body, weakened by long disease, is like a house that is ready to fall about the tenant's ears–yet God, who is All-Sufficient here, will be All-Sufficient on yonder dying bed! He who has been almighty in life will be almighty in death!

Fear not that solemn flight through tracks unknown, or the awful appearance at the eternal Throne. The God of Grace is All-Sufficient for all the mysteries of eternity. He is All-Sufficient for the thunders of judgment, the terrors of vengeance and the dread of Hell. Fear not the crash of worlds when He shall bid them all dissolve! The Ever-Living Redeemer, able to save unto the uttermost, is All-Sufficient to support your spirit when all created things shall pass away and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. There exists not a conceivable ground of fear to the man who puts his trust in God Almighty!

O Beloved, set this as a seal upon your arm to strengthen you and roll it as a stone upon the sepulcher of your doubts. Never let them rise again. If you trusted a puny man, you might doubt. But resting upon God, how can you be disquieted? If you relied upon changing humanity–if you placed your confidence in a creature that might love today and hate tomorrow–then, indeed, you could be unhappy!

But His love is everlasting and His power endures forever! Why, then, are you cast down? You have built your soul's hope upon the immoveable rock of All-Sufficiency and you shall prove the truth of that inspired assurance–"Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him and honor him."

Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope in God and cease from trusting man whose breath is in his nostrils. Then shall your light shine forth as the morning and a dew from Heaven shall cause you to bud and blossom with joy and rejoicing. Be glad in the Lord you righteous, and shout for joy all you that are upright in heart, for unto you has He spoken and given this for the rock of your confidence–"I am the Almighty God."

II. Secondly, our text goes on to speak of our RIGHT POSITION. The Lord says, "I am Almighty God," and then He adds, "Walk before Me." It is much easier for me to talk about this than it will be to practice it. The meaning is simple–Divine Grace alone can work in us the actual obedience. Come, gracious Spirit, and teach us to walk before the Lord in the land of the living. God is an All-Sufficient God–then, Believer, never go away from Him–but abide in Him forevermore.

There is a sense in which we always walk before God, for, “in Him we live, and move, and have our being.” And He sees us altogether. But that is not what is intended here. It means this– Abide, O Believer, in a constant sense of God’s Presence. “Walk before Me, the All-Sufficient God.” Do not wander into paths where you will be made to feel, “I have left my God.” Have your Friend at hand–

“Be still, my Heart, near my God,

And my God, still near my heart.”

Remember, He is a very present help in time of trouble and strive to realize this as a daily fact. You have not to send for your God in an emergency, but you are to walk before your God believing Him to be always near you.

Hagar once felt the power of that word, “You God see me,” but Believers ought to feel it every moment. “Seeing Him who is invisible,” is not a thing for now and then, but an hourly exercise! It should be the general tenor of the Believer’s life to live always under the great Father’s inspection. A poet puts it–“live as ever under the great TaskMaster’s eyes.” But I confess I do not like the word, Task-Master.

To live always as under my Father’s eyes has all the force of the poet’s line, but has much more of sweetness. He is near me whether I journey or abide at home, whether I sorrow or rejoice. If I wake, His eyes pour sunlight on my face! If I sleep, He draws the curtains

and His Presence shades me from all ill. If I rest, I sit at His feet in contemplation. If I labor, I work in His vineyard in His name and for His sake, expecting a gracious reward from Him. “Walk before Me.” Not merely, “think before Me,” and, “pray before Me,” but, “walk before Me.” I know many find it easy to cultivate a sense of God’s Presence in their study, or in the room where they are accustomed to pray, but the point is this–to feel it in business and in the details of everyday life!

God’s eyes are upon me when I am weighing out or measuring the goods. When I am engrossed with transactions with my fellow merchants, or when I, as a servant, am sweeping up the hearth or minding the household duties, He is there! This you should distinctly recognize and act upon. You are to live in the little things of life knowing that God is always with you and always looking at you–you are to do your work just as will please Him. Oh, how we smart ourselves up if there is somebody calling to see us! How we adjust our dress in the presence of those whom we admire! I have sometimes thought I have seen working men proceeding very slowly, indeed, at their tables when alone, but when the master comes by they quicken their pace wonderfully!

That is all wrong. It is eye-service–the custom of a man-pleaser–not the habit of one who would please the Lord! We should feel, “God is always looking at me.” There are many words we would not say if we remembered that He would hear them and many an

act we dare not do if we remembered that He would record it! Yes, there is the Believer's true place–my God is God Almighty and I am always in His Presence. A person might do 50 things in a certain place which he would not think of doing if he were at court and had just presented a petition to the Queen. There is a certain manner of action which we all observe when we are in such conditions and, therefore, the reasoning is valid when I ask you what manner of persons we ought to be before the King of kings!

We are always in Jehovah's courts and under His royal gaze–"Walk before Me." Live ever as in the court, for remember, O Believer, you are not like an ordinary person. If an ordinary person sins, it is only a common subject of the King, but you–why, you are a courtier, a favored courtier! You are one that He has chosen to tread His courts! No, more–the Prince Imperial has espoused you to Himself! You are the bride of the Ever-Blessed Bridegroom, the spouse of Immanuel and there is always jealousy where there is much love! "The Lord your God is a jealous God." Whatever He may be to others, He is very jealous of those on whom He has set His everlasting love. "Our God is a consuming fire." Walk before a jealous God, then, with scrupulous regard to His honor and His holiness.

Oh, it is a great word this–"walk before Me." Its brevity is not so notable as its fullness. Surely it means realize My Presence, and then, in general life and ordinary conversation continue under a

sense of it, serious, devout, holy, earnest, trustful, consecrated, Christ-like. But He meant more than that. “Walk before Me.” That is, “Delight in My company.” True Believers find their choicest joy in communion with God–and if we always walked before God in a sense of communing with Him, our peace would be like a river and our righteousness like the waves of the sea!

Would it be possible for us to feel any distress of heart if we always enjoyed the Savior’s love? I think there are no bitters known that would be able to affect our palate if we always had in our mouth the love of the Savior in its ineffable, all-conquering sweetness. “Walk before Me.” Do not interfere with God’s purposes. Do not, unbelieving, try to help Omnipotence and supplement Omniscience, but rejoice in the Lord and find satisfaction in Him only. Be filled with His fullness and satiated with His favor. Go and do your part, which is to obey and to commune, and leave God’s work to God. Walk before Him and attend to that, only. Do not doubt God’s power to fulfill His own decrees. Do not doubt that He will keep His Word to the letter and to the minute, but cultivate fellowship with God for this will ennoble you and help you to give glory to His name. “Walk before Me.” Does not it mean just this, in a word–“Do not act as seeing anybody else except Me. Walk before Me”?

Now, Abram had walked before Sarah. He had listened to her and much mischief had come of his doing so at different times. The

dearest friends we have are often those who will lead us most astray when we take counsel with flesh and blood. She was peculiarly qualified from her fiery excellence of character to influence Abram and, in her unbelieving moods, to lead him away from the glorious absoluteness of his faith. She meant well enough but she was too political in her suggestion as to her handmaid. In the present case the Lord seems to say to him, “Do not suffer Sarah to affect you in these things. Walk before Me.” Beloved, mind you keep clear of the unbelieving advice of good people and then you will have less to fear from bad ones!

And there was Hagar–Abram had been a great deal distressed about her–and it was but right that he should feel much interest in her welfare. And there was her son, Ishmael, whom he loved and whom he would have to send away from the household, in the future, with deep regret. God says to Abram, “Do not allow your course to be shaped by regarding Hagar, or regarding Ishmael, or regarding Sarah or anybody else. Walk before Me.” I am persuaded that a regard for God, a sense of duty and a straight-forward following out of convictions is the only true style of living! For if you begin to notice the whims and wishes of one, then you will have to do the same with another–and if your course of conduct is to be shaped to please men you will become man’s slave and nothing better–and no child of God ought to come into that condition.

If I felt I came into this pulpit to please any of you, I should feel mean, utterly mean and unfit to preach to you. And you would soon know it and find out that God was not blessing me to your souls. And if any of you, in your course of business, are always trying to catch the eye of this person or cringing and fawning to this other nobleman, or squire, or gentleman, why, you are mean, too! But the man who says, "I try to do right in God's sight. I have not swerved from a sense of conscious rectitude as before the living God"–why, Sir, you have got all the freedom of soul that you can desire this side of Heaven! To walk before God, that is the point! To fear the Lord and no one else–that is the state of mind to aim at! Make this the master passion of your soul, "For me to live is Christ." Make the honor of God your chief motive and the Law of God your rule. Walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

III. But we must pass on, for there is another point. And that is, as we have considered our sure reliance and our right position, we notice next OUR GLORIOUS AIM–"Be you perfect." Now, the connection shows us that the only way to be perfect is to walk before the Lord. If any man desires holiness he must get it through communion. The way to be transformed into the likeness of God is to live in the company of God! That which you look upon you will soon be like and if your eyes look on God, your character will become like God.

Hence the order of our text is highly suggestive and should be earnestly noted and practically carried out. First, God must be known as All-Sufficient–thus He helps and enables His servant to walk before Him, and then, as a consequence, that favored servant labors to obey the word of command–"BE YOU PERFECT." There could be no walking before the Lord if All-Sufficient Grace did not work it in us. And the command, "Be you perfect," would be mere mockery if Almighty Love did not stand engaged to work all our works in us. To a man who has learned to rest in Almighty faithfulness, the perfect Law is delightful–and with confidence in the energy of the Holy Spirit he is not staggered by its commands.

I desire you to note this for the order of Holy Scripture is always full of reason and weight. Whatever ill-taught divines may do, the Holy Spirit never puts the fruit before the root and never places the pinnacle where the foundation should be. Begin with God's All-Sufficiency. Go on to the holy fellowship and obedience and then aim at Scriptural perfection and so you will take everything in due sequence.

But we must pass on. As you are aware, our margin reads the text thus, "Be you sincere," or, "Be you upright," and either translation would not be incorrect. Now, child of God, you have been saying, "I do not see how God is to fulfill His promise to me." What have you to do with that? Walk before God and be sincere. He will

attend to the due performance of all that He has promised. Remember–

"Though dark is your way, since He is your Guide,

'Tis yours to obey, 'tis His to provide."

In all things be transparently sincere. Never pray a formalistic prayer or sing a heartless hymn, or prattle out an experience you never felt. Shun first and foremost the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy! Be what you would seem to be. Be down-right, intensely real, thorough–and if you are that you shall never find God less thorough than you are, nor the Lord less true to His Word than you shall be. If you are wavering and double-minded, you must not expect anything of the Lord. But if you are single-hearted He will abundantly care for you.

Mind this, I pray you, every day you live. This is the era of plausible sham, the era of superficiality–therefore be unmistakably true before the God of Truth. The margin translates the passage by the word "upright," and it comes to just this. You are fretting about how the Lord will deal with you. Brother, that is no concern of yours. Your concern is that you be upright in business. "My trade falls off," says one. Be upright, Brother! Whatever you do, be upright. "But I have drifted into such difficulties, I am afraid I shall be ruined." Be upright, Brother! Whatever you do, be upright. "Could not I get away a few of my goods, for instance, which ought to be my creditors'?" Brother, be upright! Be upright.

“Ah, but then, surely, I shall hardly have a rag left.” Be upright, Brother, be upright! “Oh, but I must consider my children.” “Walk before Me,” says the Lord, “and be you upright.” “Oh, but a man must take care of himself and his family.” Be upright, Brother! That is the main thing to take care about. It will not matter how poor you are if you do not lose your character. Lose everything else and you may yet be happy. But if you lose your peace of mind who can comfort you? If the worldling can point at you and say, “There is a professor who wronged his creditors,” that will be worse than all! No court is so much to be dreaded as the court of conscience–keep all things clear there. Better an honest pauper than a rich rogue.

I am sure your fellow Christians will respect you none the less, however low you come, if you come there fairly. All those whose love is worth the having will cling to you in hearty sympathy and only false friends, the parasites of the hour, will desert you and a good riddance will their departure turn out to be! But avoid, I implore you, those tricks so common among traders nowadays–those rash speculations, those deceptive accommodations, the lying and duping of others which men fly to as a drowning man catches at a straw–a straw that he ought never to touch. Not losing, but cheating is the mischief–and the Lord says to you, “I am God All-Sufficient: I can take care of you: I can bring you through all this. Do not touch forbidden things in order to escape from trial, or your

trials will multiply and crush you. Walk before Me, as under My eye; and be you upright."

But our version says, "Be you perfect," and for my part, I like it as it stands–"Be you perfect." "Oh," says one, "but how can we be perfect?" I will ask you a question–Would you have God command you to be less than perfect? If so, He would be the Author of an imperfect Law! "The Law of the Lord is perfect." How could it be otherwise? I do not find that He bids us partly keep His Law, but wholly keep it. And so the Lord holds up this as the standard of a Christian–"Be you perfect."

And does it not mean let us be perfect in desiring to have all the rounds of Divine Grace? Suppose a man should have faith and should have love but no hope? He would not be perfect. He would be like a child that had two arms but only one foot. It would not be a perfect child. You must have all the Graces if you are to be a perfect man. I think I have known some Christians who have had all the Graces except patience and they could never be patient. "Walk before Me," says the Lord, "and be you perfect in patience." I have known some others who seemed to have almost every Grace except the Grace of forgiveness. They could not very readily forget any injury that had been done to them.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, get that Grace, the Grace of forgiveness, and walk before the Lord with that or you will remain a mutilated character! A Christian's character is spoilt by the

omission of any one virtue. And you must labor in the Presence of God to have all these things that they be in you and abound. Be you in this sense perfect. And as we have all the Graces, so we should seek to have in our lives exhibited all the virtues in the fulfillment of all our duties. It is a very sad thing when you hear of a Christian man that he is a very excellent deacon, that he is a very admirable local preacher or Sunday school teacher, but that he is a very unkind father. That "but" spoils it all. A saint abroad is no saint if he is a devil at home.

We have known men of whom it has been said that out of doors they were all that could be desired, but they were bad husbands. That "but"–how it mars the tale! It is the dead fly which has got into a very good pot of ointment and made the whole of it stink. Keep the dead flies out, Brethren! By God's Grace may your character be full-orbed! May God grant you Grace to be at home and to be abroad–to be in the shop and in the chamber and to be in every department of life–just that which a man should be who walks before the All-Sufficient God.

Now, I think I hear somebody saying, "How shall we ever reach such a height?" My dear Brother, you never will do so except you remember the first part of the text–"I am the Almighty God." He can help you! If there is any sin that you cannot overcome yourself, He can overcome it for you. If there is any virtue you have not yet reached, He can lead you up to it. Never despair of the highest

degree of Divine Grace. What the best of men have been, you also may be. There is no reason why you should not yet be elevated beyond all the sin into which you may have fallen from inadvertence or temptation.

Have hope, my Brothers and Sisters! Have hope for a higher platform of character. Have hope yet to be conformed unto the image of God's dear Son. Aim at nothing less than perfection. But I will not detain you longer except to notice that last word. It is a very sweet word–"I will make My covenant between Me and you." How run the words? "I will make My covenant between Me and you." Oh, it is the man that knows an All-Sufficient God and that lives in the Presence of God and that endeavor to be perfect in his life–it is that man that enjoys communion with God such as no one else knows, for, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

"There shall be a covenant between Me and you." It sounds so sweet to me–as if He had said, "I will say nothing to the outside world. Neither will you tell them. It shall be with you and Me. We will strike hands together. Abram, you shall be My friend and I will be your Friend forever. You will say, 'My Father,' and I will say, 'My son.' You will put yourself into My hands and I will carry you. You will ask to see My Glory and I will make My Glory pass before you.

“I will tell you what I mean to do. If I am going to destroy Sodom, I will come and tell Abram my friend. I will let you speak to Me and I will hear you. Time after time I will stay while you do plead for 50, and for 45, and 30, 20, and ten. ‘There shall be a covenant between Me and you.’ And I will make it. It shall not be such a one as your timorous faith would make. I will make it after the manner of My bounty, My eternity and My All-Sufficiency.” When the Lord makes a covenant, it will stand! It will be sure! It will be rich! It will be full! And, O, I pray that every one of you may know that covenant and live upon its incomparable blessings! “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him,” and He will show them His covenant.

But many a child of God walks obstinately and the Lord will not fully reveal the covenant to such. Some of His Peters follow afar off and they get into trouble–they do not enjoy the sweets of Divine fellowship and peculiar manifestation. But this careful walking, this close walking, this keeping near to an All-Sufficient God, this resting solely in Him–O, this it is that brings the sweetness and the joy which are the foretaste of Heaven–which are, indeed, a young Heaven begun this side the tomb!

I pray the Lord will bring my dear friends all into holy fellowship with Himself! And if any of you have not come to the border of the happy land, I pray you may be led there at once. The way of salvation is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Faith is both the

road to the highest happiness and the way to the first safety–faith is both the highest round of the ladder and its first step–“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Have done with self-righteous works and come to the trusting. Have done with seeking to save self and accept Jesus alone as your Redeemer! The Lord grant you Grace to do so and His shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

Ge 19:12 • A Solemn Enquiry Concerning Our Families

SERMON 0601

A *Solemn Enquiry Concerning Our Families*

"And the men said unto Lot, have you here any besides? Son-in-law and your sons, and your daughters and whatever you have in the city, bring them out of this place."

Genesis 19:12

THE angelic messengers of mercy were not only earnest to bring Lot out of the city, but in their great kindness they reminded him of an important matter which, in the alarm of the tumult without and in the surprise of their fearful tidings, he might possibly have forgotten. They suggested to his distracted heart a loving care for his relatives and friends. His wife and his two daughters were already with him in the house, but he had two sons-in-law to whom

his daughters were espoused, if not married. And the angels suggest to him to make an effort to rescue these, also, from the destruction which awaited the filthy city.

In the perturbation of mind which is so usual in the renewed heart at first, it is no marvel if a man should be so taken up with thoughts of his own safety as to forget the welfare of others. Therefore I see a wisdom in the saying of the Apostle Paul to the trembling jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, and your house." The jailer's question was personal and confined to himself–"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" In this we judge him not–for his own conversion must be the object of the deepest and most earnest thoughts of a convicted sinner. But Paul's answer was large and liberal–"You shall be saved, and your house."

There may be some here who have but lately passed from darkness to light. In the fear lest you should be mistaken, or in the joy of your new-found comfort, it may be you have scarcely begun to think of your wife, your children, or your relatives–is it not time to begin at once? Let this text come, this morning, fresh out of Holy Scripture as though it dropped anew from the angel's tongue–"Have you here any besides?" You are yourself privileged by Sovereign Mercy and singled out for safety–have you here in the land of sin any besides? Have you not some unconverted kinsfolk, some unsaved relative, some who are written in your family register but who are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life?

Come, Friend, think about this and give heed to the question, "Have you here any besides?" My heart is in a blaze with love to souls this morning and if there are no others who care for the salvation of their fellow men, I can truly say I agonize for conversions! Forgive me–in my excitement my thoughts should seem tame and feeble, for I have passed out of the realm of thoughts and am under the absolute dominion of my feelings. Come, Holy Spirit, come and aid my tongue which is all too feeble to express the language of my inmost heart!

We would observe, first, that such a question as this APPEALS TO OUR NATURAL AFFECTIONS. Surely, unless we have lost manhood, we love our kindred and desire their good! We have not yet become like the ostriches in the wilderness which care not for their young. Our flesh has not congealed into marble, nor are our hearts become like millstones. We have a very tender concern for those united to us by ties of nature and esteem them as parts of ourselves. What parent is not glad to see his children in good health? We will watch with them all through the weary night when they are ill and can we not pray for them when they are sick with sin?

It is a singular mercy when our children are born to us without deformity and in full possession of every sense. And it is a great blessing when a man can look round upon a numerous household and see them all full of cheerfulness and hope. Do we care for their

bodily welfare and shall we neglect to pray that their souls may prosper? Can we see the deformity of sin without tears? Can we remark the blindness of our children towards Divine things? Can we observe how deaf they are to the admonitions of mercy? Can we discover clearly the depravity of their nature without deep grief and regret? We hasten to the best physicians when we see anything amiss and we spare no cost for their recovery.

Shall we ever be at peace, or know what rest means concerning them until we see their eyes open and the light of Jesus streaming into their souls–until we know that their tongues are loosed to tell of God's mercy towards them–until there is formed in them a new heart and a right spirit? We are anxious to see in our children a due share of intelligence. We are very quick to notice any signs of it. And perhaps we are over anxious to remark upon their shrewdness and good sense–it is an overwhelming sorrow to a parent to discover weakness or imbecility of mind in his offspring.

But what shall we say if we cannot perceive any knowledge of Christ in our children? Shall the folly of their hearts cause us no anxiety? Does it give us no concern if they put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness? Do we seek to have them educated in the various arts and sciences and not desire that they should comprehend with all saints the love of Christ which passes all knowledge? One thing is necessary–all the rest may have a temporary necessity, but the one thing–acceptance

in Christ and faith in Jesus is absolutely necessary! Can we be content when we see them neatly dressed, strongly framed and progressing in their learning, while their souls are not clothed with Christ's righteousness and they are ignorant of the power of Divine love?

Can we rest content while their souls are not trained for God, not tutored for Heaven, not educated for eternity? Why, common sense teaches our natural affection that the first thought should be the training of the soul and the highest desire of our spirits should be that they may live before God, whatever may become of them in their education as to the things of time and sense. It is only natural that we should care for the prosperity of our friends and children. We are grieved if we hear that they meet with any accident. If losses and calamities befall them, I trust we know how to weep with them that weep. We would sooner bear pain ourselves than that they should suffer. We have often felt our own cross to be very light, if we have thereby lifted a cross from the shoulders of those dear to us.

But can we think of their sinning against God and abiding under the anger of the Most High without any emotion? Above all, can we contemplate for an instant their death and their appearance before God unpardoned–their condemnation and their eternal doom–without a horror taking hold upon us? My friend, my sister, my wife, my child in Hell! How can I bear the dreadful thought?

Mother, if your child were running in the streets and there were a fear that yonder wheel would go over it and crush it, your heart would be in your mouth! Can you see your child in danger of eternal destruction without your bosom heaving high with fond maternal anxiety?

If I saw my friend upon the edge of a precipice I would rush to his rescue. And can I be silent when I see so many whom I love walking upon the verge of eternal ruin, utterly unconcerned about their souls? Natural affection, which makes us care for our children and friends that they may prosper, will, if it is rightly trained, make us far more earnest for their salvation from the wrath to come. If there are any who are professedly Christians who nevertheless have no sort of interest in the welfare of their children, I only utter what I believe to be the solemn truth when I say that their profession is a mistake, if not an hypocrisy–they had better give it up! If you care not for the souls of others, you do not know the value of your own!

God's people are a tender-hearted people. Like their Savior, they cannot look upon Jerusalem without weeping over it–they cannot view with complacency the destruction of any, much less can they be careless concerning the condition of those who spring from their own loins–who are united to them by ties of blood! Like Doddridge, we dare say in the sight of God, that we love the souls of men–

"My God, I feel the mournful scene.

My heart yearns over dying men!
And gladly my pity would reclaim,
And snatch the firebrands from the flame."

I set you down as nearer akin to a devil than to a saint if you can go your way and look into the face of your friend or child and know him to be on the downward road and yet never pray for him nor use any means for his conversion. May God grant that no doctrinal belief may ever dry up the milk of human kindness in our souls!

Certainly the doctrines of Divine Grace, such as election and effectual redemption, will not do so. Error may petrify, but the Truth of God melts. May we feel that no dogma can be Scriptural which is not consistent with a sincere love to men. Truth must be consistent with its Author's Character. And He who has revealed saving Truth is the God of Love–no, He is Love itself! And that cannot be true which naturally and legitimately would lead men to be unloving! May we be such parents, such brothers, such sisters, such children that it shall be the first anxiety of our spirits that our children, our parents, our husband, our wife, our friends, our brothers and sisters should be brought to partake with us of the things of God!

I do think that the query which is suggested this morning, "Have you in Sodom any besides?" is one which forcibly appeals to the natural affections while it does no violence to the judgment. I shall

hope, therefore, that in such a congregation as the present, where there are so many loving hearts, my question will drop like a spark upon dry tinder to set the soul on fire or melt into the soul as a snowflake into the sea, to increase the flood of holy earnestness. My own heart is stirred in its inmost depths by the enquiry and I cannot but hope that yours will be also. You who are friends, I now pray you show yourselves friendly. Parents, be parents, indeed. Brothers, act a true fraternal part. Sisters, let your tender love find a fitting channel. Husbands and wives, let your conjugal union awaken you to most tender emotions. Let every fond relationship stir us to care for others while the enquiry is made, "Have you here any besides?"

II. In the second place, the question is one which AROUSES HOLY SOLICITUDE. Shall I stop a moment while you think over the roll of your friends and kinsfolk? "Have you here any besides?" Are they all saved? Are you quite sure that all of them are rejoicing in Christ Jesus and are washed in His blood? Mother, it was such a comfort to you when your first-born was added to the Church. And what a joy when your fair daughters subscribed with their hand to the name of Jesus! Are there not others who are strangers to the commonwealth of Israel?

Brother, it has been a great delight to you to see your brother saved. Your heart has swollen high with holy joy to know that a sister has passed from death unto life. But there are others of the

family–are they all converted? Are there not some still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity–concerning whom even in the judgment of charity you are compelled to say, “Lord, have mercy upon them, for they have no mercy upon themselves”? Have you no tears for the unsaved ones? No prayers for those who abide under the wrath of God? In your house you have seen your servants saved. And next to the salvation of one’s children, there is no greater mercy than to see one’s servants walking in the faith–but are all of your servants saved?

Is there not one in the house with you who still has not given her heart to Christ? You are happy, my Brother, thrice happy, if while I suggest this question you can read down the whole list with sparkling eyes and say, “Yes, I can say, like Noah, they are all with me in the ark–my wife and my sons and my sons' wives with them, they are all secure–and though the deluge sweep over the whole world, in that Covenant Ark of salvation, with my whole household, I hope to float in safety.”

But it is not so, I am afraid, with the most of us. We have an Esau as well as a Jacob, an Ishmael as well as an Isaac. To provoke you to earnest solicitude this morning, let me remind you of times when we should be anxious about our friends and children. When first we ourselves look to Christ, we should care for others. Oh, what a joy it is to feel the burden rolling from our shoulders–to be able to say with holy delight–“Great God, I’m saved! The chief of sinners is at

last at peace with You! Your enemy is reconciled, my sin is covered, my iniquity is cast into the depths of the sea." What should be the next thought? If this is so sweet to me, there are my sin-burdened relatives–O God, bring them to know this blessedness!

If I leap at the sound of Jesus' name and find it blessed to know that sin is forgiven, O my God, let others whom I love be set free and be enabled to triumph in justification through the blood of Jesus Christ! We would not eat our morsel alone lest it grow stale through our selfishness. The woods drops with honey–we cannot eat it all–let us call others to taste its sweetness. I think, dear Friends, there can be no better season than the first blush of your newborn piety in which to cry unto the Most High with strong crying and tears, that He would be pleased to pluck others, as He has done yourselves, like firebrands from the flame. "In the morning sow your seed."

Then there are times of Christian enjoyment. When we have been sitting round the table of our dying Lord, we have been made to feast at the banquet of wine with King Jesus–the banner over us has been love and His fruit has been sweet unto our taste. But while we were downstairs at the table, did we not think of those upstairs among the spectators? Will not our hearts wing their flight with anxious desires towards loved ones who cannot unite with us? Do we not hope that before long they will sit side by side with us? Let

us remember those at home this morning–at home, did I say? Alas, some are worse than at home for they are now where we were once, spending the Sunday in sin–finding their pleasures anywhere but in the things of God!

A warm fire and a happy family gathering may well make us think of those shivering in the cold outside–I charge you, Believer, forget not your poor unconverted children. Let your highest and most rapt moments of communion with Christ be just the times when your soul shall speak to God as Abraham talked to his Father and his Friend and pleaded for the sinners of Sodom. I think when we are downcast, when our soul is filled with bitter trouble, then also is an appropriate season to pray for others. God turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends, and he may turn our captivity when we do the same. Why, if I who have an interest in Christ, yet feel so desponding, what must be the wretchedness of those who have no Christ to go to?

If we who live on the bread of Heaven, yet complain that our spirit oftentimes sinks within us, what must be the failings of heart–the horror of great darkness–which those must experience who feed upon the wind and would gladly fill their bellies with the husks which the swine eat? Let your own grief help you to arrive at some knowledge of the griefs of unconverted souls and go to the Throne of Grace on their account. It may also help to stimulate this holy solicitude to think of how we shall feel in regard to our

children and friends when they come to lie sick. They will be sick as well as others. And when they are in jeopardy of their lives and the physician tells us that their existence trembles in the scale, how shall we feel, then?

Can we gaze upon their pallid countenances without bitter reproaches for our past indifference? I am afraid I cannot say I have had a sick friend concerning whom I could feel that I had done all I ought to have done. I do not know whether you have–happy are you if you feel quite guiltless. When we have seen our friends on their beds of languishing, have we not thought, "Ah, would to God we had over again the occasions and opportunities of talking to them on Divine things, for now they are so racked with pain, so distracted with many thoughts that there is scarcely room to sow the good seed, because of the many thorns." O that the harvest may not be past and the summer ended before we begin our sowing!

Fools lose the spring and then lament in the time of harvest. May Heaven save us from the fool's lament. And what will you think if your children should die unconverted–your wife, your husband, your friend? To lose our loved ones is one of the sore, though common troubles of life. But oh, it can be little trouble to send on those who are ripe for Glory! Go where Glory waits you–we would not detain you here! To think that while we are weeping here they are singing around the eternal Throne wipes the tears from our

eyes! But what must it be to bury them without “a sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection”?

To put the body under the sod with this dread thought upon us, that, “we sorrow as those that have no hope”? It is the death of death to fear that our friends have not escaped the second death. Must you not confess, this morning, that if some of your kinsfolk were to die as they are, you could not, unless you were to stultify your own conscience, entertain anything like a sure hope of their entering into eternal life? Now, as you would wish you had prayed for them, as you would wish you had labored with them, when they are dead, so do now! While there is an opportunity, avail yourself of it for fear you should have to mourn with briny tears that the soul has gone, and that you have never rendered it any help. Before the sun goes down forever, use its light. It is vain to warn after the ship is wrecked. Hell will never give up its prey–nor will your tears mitigate the fury of its fires. It is now or never. Lord, make it now!

Think again, how you would care for your friends if you were, yourself, this morning very near death. O my Hearers, I sometimes think of the time when I shall lie a-dying–when all alone my spirit must cross the black brook of Kedron and leave the city of our solemnities for the other side of Jordan. Then such thoughts as these will surely steal over me–“O that I might preach to this people again! O that I had the opportunity of addressing those thousands once more that I might preach in real earnest and not talk

away the time! O that I might deal with their souls, as if they really were immortal and there were a judgment to come! O that I might set before them life and death, Hell and Heaven and plead with them, knowing the terrors of the Lord."

I can scarcely tell you what must be the sorrow of a dying man at the end of an unfaithful ministry. Then shall every wasted opportunity stuff his pillow with thorns. There shall be no sleep for that aching head, no rest for those weary eyes–he has damned the souls of men by his carelessness and sloth and now he must give his account. He is haunted by grim forebodings of wrath to come and knows not where to turn for comfort. He has insulted Heaven and played into the hands of Hell. What will be your thought, my Hearers, if in your narrower sphere you shall have been unfaithful?

There on the sick bed, though the comforts of complete forgiveness may take away from you the sting of death, which is sin, yet even the blood of Christ will not be able to remove those solemn heart-moving regrets which shall be suggested by a lively remembrance that you had opportunities of doing good and wasted them! And now that you are dying, but leaving unconverted children behind you–dying and the wife is still unsaved–dying, and your father still lives to whom you might have spoken of the way of God, but who now has no loving child to care about his soul!

As you must die, Believers, seek to live like dying men and labor for your sons and daughters and kinsfolk as those who must soon

leave them and have no other opportunities of doing them good. You cannot come back from Heaven! If you have neglected a duty, you cannot leave Heaven to perform it. If there is one thing that can make an angel in Heaven envy a man on earth, it is his power to intercede for sinners, to preach, to woo and to win souls. If there is one thing which a glorified saint before the Throne of God might wish to come to earth for, it is surely this–that he might speak to impenitent brothers, that he might weep over unconverted friends and perhaps bring them to repentance. "Work while it is called today, for the night comes wherein no man can work."

III. And now we turn, seeking the same earnest object, to the third point of our discourse. Such a question as this is calculated to EXCITE US TO ANXIOUS EFFORT for mere solicitude without effort is not genuine. A man must not pretend that he cares for the souls of others so long as he leaves one stone unturned which might be the means of blessing them. It seems to me, then, that if we are in a right state of heart this morning, one of the first things we shall do will be to tell those dear to us of their danger.

I think 1 see Lot going out that night. No very safe place, the streets of Sodom, especially after that wretched scene which had been enacted at his own door–a miracle had rescued him. But yet with his life in his hand, the good old man goes to the door of his sons-in-law. Affection is not always so strong towards sons-in-law as towards those who are of our own blood. Still he goes with all

solemnity of feeling, knowing that he, himself, should be rescued, but trembling lest these sons-in-law should refuse the invitation to escape with him.

The good old man finds his way through the winding streets of Sodom and begins to knock at the door with a resolute hand. They look down from the top of the house. “That is the voice of old Lot,” says one, “what is he doing, disturbing our comfortable slumber?” They have but little love for him. They have put on some pretense of affection that they might win his daughters, but Sodomites cannot have much love for righteous men. And consequently they have no care for Lot. “What does the old fellow want at this time of night?” they say. “Why cannot he keep seasonable hours? Besides, what a disturbance there was at his own door just now! Does he not know better than to knock at our door, when he so resolutely shut his own to protect two tramping strangers? What does he want?”

He cries to them, “My sons, this city is to be burned with fire in the morning! Come, get up and flee with me, for the two men who came to me were angels sent from God to rescue me and they have bid me seek you. Come with me!” “Ah,” they say. “What next? Old Lob–that is your name, Lob, instead of Lot–go your way and talk about your silly dreams to men of softer brains and not to us.” “No,” says he, “it is even so, by the love you bear my daughters, bear with me. If it is not so it will not matter, you can return. But if

it is so, think what it will be to be destroyed with fire and brimstone out of Heaven! I pray you, come."

But they scoff at him–they tell him he is only mocking them–that he has some motive for wishing to get them into the street and they bid him go. And with an aching heart the poor old man goes back, feeling something more than Isaiah's grief–"Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Yet as he fled out of Sodom, if the sight of his daughters reminded him of their husbands, he would think, "I am clear of their blood. I did plead with them. I did exhort them to escape. And if they would not, why, they would not–and the sin lies at their own door."

It will be some comfort to the Christian, if the worst should come to worst, that he has warned the ungodly. Let us tell them of their danger and never cease to warn until they cease to sin. Having so done, it is the duty of every Christian to tell his friend the remedy. Plain speaking about Christ is the ordinary means of bringing sinners to repentance. Those ministers most useful in soul-seeking are those who put the doctrine of simple faith in the Atonement in the clearest light. Let not your friend perish through ignorance. Tell him that whoever comes unto Christ He will in no wise cast out–that there is life in a look at the Crucified Savior! Tell him that whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. Preach no salvation by works–but preach faith and works only as the fruit of faith.

And let the doctrine that Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost be clearly set before your friend's eyes. Remember, it is not enough coldly to warn them of danger and doctrinally to teach the remedy. There are many who will go so far. But I hold, my Brothers and Sisters, that we are bound to use a constraint with our friends. Do not misunderstand me–only a loving and a tender constraint, such as these angels used with Lot. Press them, plead with them, take them by the hand. Some are afraid to do this. They fear that they should be doing the Spirit's work. My dear Brother, that is the reason why I do it, for I know the Spirit of God works by means and I am in hopes that He will use me to do His own work.

"Well, but we cannot bring them to Christ," says one. That is true and that is false. That is true–you cannot, unless God is with you. But instrumentality is the ordinary method by which God accomplishes His purpose and therefore you may be enabled to bring sinners to Jesus. I do not, when I plead with sinners, plead as though I pleaded, or as though there were anything in my pleading which could do them good! I plead, as Paul says, "As though God did beseech you by us." This is the position the Christian parent should take up, the position of God pleading with men, "As though God did beseech you by us." Not man seeking to win a soul, but the Son of Man coming to seek and to save that which was lost.

Do not be afraid, dear Friends, that you will ever violate the doctrine of election or predestination by the most solemn

determination you can make in the sight of God that you will wrestle and weep and agonize to bring your children to Himself. Rightly understood, this doctrine is an incentive to duty and never an opiate for sloth. “Compel them to come in,” is the Savior’s own command. I remember an old man who was a nursing father to all the young men in the parish where he lived. This one thing he used to do–there was scarcely a lad whom he would not know and speak to and there was a time with most of the lads when he specially sought to see them decided.

Suppose one of them was going away to London? He would be sure to ask him to have a cup of tea with him. “You are going away, John,” he would say, “I should not like you to go without spending an evening with me.” If it was a fine sunshiny evening, he would say, “You know I have often talked to you about the things of God and I am afraid that as yet there has been no impression produced. You are going to London and will meet with many temptations and I fear you may fall into them. I should like to pray with you once before you go. Let us walk down the field together.”

There was a tree, an old oak tree in a solitary place, where he would say, “To help you to remember my words better, we will pray under this tree.” The young and the old knelt together and the old man poured out his soul before God. And when he had wrestled with God and talked with his young friend, he would say, “Now, when I am dead and gone and you will perhaps come back to the

place where you lived when a youth–let that tree be a witness between God and your soul that here I wrestled with you. And if you forget God and do not give your heart to Christ, let that tree stand to accuse your conscience till it yields to the entreaties of Divine love."

Now here was a using of what I have styled constraint. But it is not a constraint, you see, such as the Papist would use. And as for physical force, of course that is never to be used–but the constraint of spiritual force, Divine love and earnestness. May I ask whether we have all done our duty in this matter? Here stands one who has not. And if every Christian here who has something to repent of in this matter were to stand up, I question, Brothers and Sisters, whether many of us dare keep our seats.

Ah, if they perish, we cannot say that we wept after them! Whitfield could say to his congregations often, "Ah, if you are lost, it is not for want of weeping after, not for want of my groans and tears." But I am afraid if our children were lost, or our brothers and sisters were lost, we could not say so much as that. May God forgive the past and may He help us in the future. And from this time forth may we resolve as in the presence of the flowing wounds of Christ and as He enables us we will–

"Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior we have found,
Point them to the redeeming blood,

And say, ‘Behold the way to God.’ ”

IV. And now I shall not weary you, I trust, if I continue a little longer. It seems to me that our text FOSTERS A VERY CHEERING HOPE. It says, “Have you here any besides?,” as much as if it would say, “Hope for them all. Why should they not all be brought out of Sodom? Why should one be left behind?” That was a grand saying of Moses when Pharaoh said, “Go, serve the Lord. Only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you. And Moses said, You must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle also shall go with us. There shall not an hoof be left behind”–the smallest lamb, or the meanest goat–they shall all come out.

So it is glorious when in strength of faith the father of the family can feel that he will give the Master no rest till they age–the most of my children are converted and if one shall perish, I must bear with it as a cross.“ No! But saying in your soul with humble boldness–

“Lord, I will not let You go,

Till a blessing You bestow

upon every child of my loins, upon every brother and every sister and every relative.“ I say the text fosters a hope that you may yet see them all brought to Jesus!

I stayed some few months ago with a Brother in Christ in a certain town in the midland counties. I might mention his name if I could, He is the banker of the town. I was delighted when staying there, to hear a story from his own lips which is also printed and worthy of your careful perusal. His wife, a godly woman, had been exercised with many thoughts for her husband and children. She did not live to see her prayers answered. She fell asleep, but with a good hope that yet her husband and her children would join her in the skies.

She said that her husband would experience a bad trial, but that it would be greatly blessed to him and so it turned out. Our esteemed friend, that excellent man of God, Mr. Denham Smith, went to preach in the town and the gentleman went to hear him. He did not go with any desire for conversion–he knew not its value–he merely went to hear Mr. Smith as a person well known as an evangelist. The Word, through Divine Grace, pierced his heart and about the same time it also reached the heart of one of his daughters. He was under deep distress of mind but through the simple teaching of our friend, Mr. Smith, he was led to rest upon Jesus and cast his anchor in the blessed anchorage of the Atonement.

His daughter, about the same time, through the united prayers of her newly-converted father and Mr. Smith, was brought into perfect peace. He thought, “This is a happy season–two of my sons are out on business, but I will send for them to come home.” They were

brought home–they were asked to go and hear Mr. Smith. One of them found the Savior. The other remained indifferent. The three converted ones began to pray for the others and, to make the story–a blessed story–very short, there were six in the household, sons and daughters, they were all saved, father included!

They had but three domestic servants–Mr. Smith visited them a second time. It had been a subject of prayer that the three servants might be saved and they were so and are now a whole family walking in the Truth of God! Such an instance as this in a somewhat large family should excite the desire of all Christian parents, that they may have the same blessing! Of course we cannot expect it where there are very little children. But we can expect, we ought to expect family conversions. And in answer to prayer we may have it where the children are come to an age in which they are capable of understanding the things of God and knowing the Truth as it is in Christ Jesus. I know that many of you feel your eyes watering at the thought of being able to say, "Here am I, and the children You have given me, for I have no greater joy than this–to see my children walking in the Truth."

Do not think that the conversion of children is a thing unusual or suspicious–look for it and believe in it. You cannot change their hearts, or give them Divine life –it is beyond your power. But it is not beyond the power of your God. And God will refuse His children nothing if they do but know how to plead His promise and

ask in faith, doubting nothing. Only let us feel more about this and I am persuaded we shall see better times with regard to our young people. I am resolved, in connection with this Church, as soon as I can get over my many present engagements in the country, in Scotland and so on, that we will devote ourselves to looking more directly and personally after our young people.

We must have special meetings with them. The pastor must commune with them. The elders and deacons must meet them. We must be seeking to bring in more souls. God has dealt very graciously with this Church and for eleven years there has been one long revival. But I want to see greater things than these. I believe that the prayers of the last three weeks are being heard. Last Friday I met with many of my Brethren, the ministers of London, in this place, to pray. We did pray. Our hearts were knit together in holy love and we prayed for our Churches and congregations and pleaded with God that He would make us better ministers and help us to be free from the blood of our hearers.

And I expect in answer to the prayers of my Brethren that we shall get a blessing. Moreover we have all been pleading–may I not say all? We have been crying, "Will You not revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?" But we must use the means. I must ask my dear Friends who love the Lord who are scattered about the Tabernacle to begin from this time forward to look after those who sit near them, to look after those who sit in the pews

with them. Put questions to them and endeavor gently to lead them to the Savior. Instead of one address from this pulpit, make it a thousand addresses from Christians round about!

Let me give you the nail and the hammer by preaching the sermon–but YOU–as agents in the hands of the Holy Spirit, labor to drive home the Word. And if I can get all of you who love the Lord into a thoroughly warm and earnest state, I am persuaded the great things we have seen are only the beginning of greater things to come! We are on the threshold of an era of mercy! We have journeyed to the edge of a long stretch of glorious sunlight, emerging out of the shadows into the serene clear shining of Jehovah's face. We shall see these galleries and these aisles and this vast area full of Believers yet! We shall see the Word of God running, having free course, and being glorified! But we must, dear Friends, be stirred up to holy action for it.

Alas, I must conclude! Conclude, too, with a very dark and gloomy thought. The text SUGGESTS A VERY SOLEMN FEAR, namely, that there may be some in our households who will not be saved. Ah, young men and women! Ah, you who are fathers of Christian children, but not converted yourselves! You who are godless daughters and unregenerate sons of Christian people–you are lost now and you may be lost forever! Lot's sons-in-law were consumed and why not you? Saved shall the Patriarch be, but not saved the Patriarch's son, except he shall flee out of Sodom!

Beware! No kinship can save you! You may be allied to a race of saints, but, being yourself a sinner, your pedigree cannot save you. Unconverted souls, flee away, I pray you! And may God’s Grace direct you to the Rock of Ages split for you. Hide yourself in the cracks there and let your soul find peace through Jesus the Savior. May God bless these feeble words of mine to every soul here, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Ge 19:15 • Hastening Lot

SERMON 2944

U*rging Lot*

"When the morning arose, then the angels urged Lot."

Genesis 19:15

I WILL not spend even a minute in considering whether these were Divine persons veiled in angelic form, or whether they were actually angels. In either case, I would make the same remark and lead to the same practical result. Let us learn from these angels how to do our work. "Unto the angels has He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak?" As a rule, they are not sent to be the means of saving men. They are not called to be teachers, or preachers, or pastors, but, on this occasion, they were sent to bring

Lot out of Sodom–and we may take them as exemplars in our endeavors to win souls for Christ.

How did these angels do their work? Well, first, they went to Lot's house. They got at Lot himself–and if we want to be the means of saving men, we must, somehow or other, get at them. I have seen the fishermen, in the Scot rivers, stand right down in the water while they are fishing and I believe that is the best way to fish–if we stand right down among you and come to you in your homes–we shall likely be the means of blessing to your souls.

The angels told Lot very distinctly what was going to happen in Sodom. They did not mince the matter, but revealed what its doom was to be. The city was to be destroyed and he must get out of it, or else he also would be destroyed. In like manner, we too must warn men of their danger and we must not at all flinch even if we have to utter words that have a very harsh sound about them, for love does not manifest itself by lying and smooth utterances, but by speaking the truth–even most threatening words, yet mixing sobs with them, predicting most sorrowful judgments in a most sorrowful tone.

After these angels had told Lot the truth about his peril, they were not content with doing that, but began pressing and urging him to flee out of the doomed city–"The angels urged Lot"–and when that urging did not seem to be sufficient to convince him, they laid hands upon him, his wife and his daughters. And if, my Brother, you and I, ourselves saved, wish to be the means of saving others,

we must not merely tell them the old, old story, however simply, earnestly and as often we tell it–but we must come to wrestling with them! We must plead with them, we must weep over them and we must make up our minds that if we cannot break their hearts, we will break our own. And if we cannot get them to flee out of Sodom, at any rate it shall not be because we did not labor with all our might to bring them out! Oh, that we might be as clear of the blood of all men as these angels were clear concerning the fate of Lot's wife! We shall not be able to rescue them all–even the angels did not do that. Lot's wife was a signal example of a person perishing after the best possible instruction–and Lot's sons-in-law were examples of how, with some men, the most earnest pleading may only end in mockery! Yes, dear Friend, we cannot wonder if some reject our message when so many rejected the teaching of the Master, Himself! But we must so deliver it that, at any rate, if they do refuse it, the blame shall lie entirely at their own door.

The special point in the angelic ministry, to which I desire to call your attention on this occasion, is the fact that they urged Lot. And I am going to use that fact in two ways. First, I will try to show you, that the righteous need to be urged,for Lot was a righteous man, notwithstanding his imperfections. And, secondly, that sinners–of whom, being in Sodom, Lot had become a type–

sinners especially need earnest urging. We must try not only to preach about these two

things, but to do them as the Holy Spirit shall help us.

So my first remark is, that EVEN THE RIGHTEOUS NEED TO BE URGED.

In what? Well, in almost everything good, for Dr. Watts well said–

"Look how we grovel here below,
Fond of these trifling toys.
Our souls can neither fly nor go
To reach eternal joys."

And old Francis Quarles, in one of his poems, writes–

"When our dull souls direct our thoughts to Thee,
As slow as snails are we!
But at the earth we dart our winged desire–
We burn, we burn like fire."

Some Christians need quickening even concerning common matters of Christian duty. I used to know a man–he is dead now–who professed to have been converted for 40 years, yet he had never made a profession of his faith in Baptism, though he believed it to be his duty to do so. When I stirred him up a little concerning his neglect, he said to me, "He that believes shall not make haste." And I replied, "That is a shameful perversion of Scripture! You profess to have been converted for 40 years, yet you have not obeyed your Savior's command." I explained to him the meaning of the text which he had so wickedly perverted and then I said to

him, “David said, ‘I made haste, and delayed not to keep Your commandments.’ That is a more suitable text for you.” Why, if that good Brother had been baptized that very day on the next morning before breakfast, I do not think he could have been considered guilty of any haste after the long time that he had waited! Some people, when they are young, know that they ought to unite themselves with the Church of God, but they put it off. And when they grow older, they seem confirmed in continuing in a condition which is not a right one for a Christian.

I do not lay undue stress upon Baptism, as though it were the main thing in a Christian’s life. Still, it is an important matter in which some Christians need urging, as they take such a long time over it. It seems to me that half the beauty of obedience consists in obeying the command at once! Suppose you have a boy and you say to him, “John, I want you to go on an errand,” and he says, “Very well, Father, I will go next week”? What sort of a lad is he? Suppose he says, “Yes, Father, I really mean to go, but not until tomorrow”? Is not that virtually disobedience? Call it what you may, delaying to obey is disobedience. Has it ever struck you, dear Friends, that when you postpone attendance to a duty, you sin in the postponement? How many times do you sin? I cannot calculate. If it is a duty you ought to do at this hour, yet you put it off hour after hour, do you not sin as many times as there are hours in which you delay? Perhaps it would be even more correct to say that for

every moment that a duty is neglected, there is a sin every time the clock ticks–certainly, you are keeping on in one long-continued act of sin and thereby provoking God to anger!

Neglect of duty is continuous sin. Let that little sentence abide in your memory and let it get down into your heart and irritate you into prompt obedience, for there are some of you who seem to fancy that when you have made up your minds to do a certain thing, and have good intentions concerning it, you have practically done the thing and need not trouble yourself any further about it! But it is not so for, "to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him"–particularly and above other men–"it is sin."

There was a certain prince of Monaco who left instructions that this inscription should be put on his grave, "Here lies So-and-So, prince of Monaco, a man of good intentions." That was all he could say about himself! He had not done anything, but he had intended to do something. And this is the epitaph that will have to be put over some of you unlessyou turn intention into action. But what is this but a confession that you have the responsibility of knowing what you ought to do, but you lack either the manliness, or the Divine Grace, or something else to impel you to do what you ought long ago to have done? As the angels urged Lot, so, my Christian Brothers and Sisters who are slow to move in the path of duty, would I urge you. Lie not down tonight with any duty undone if you can attend to it tonight. Rest not while there are any arrears of

obedience due to your God. Even when you have done all your duty, you will be but an unprofitable servant to your God–but what shall be said of you if precept after precept shall be left neglected? At any rate, be not so foolish as to imagine that intending to obey it is the same thing as having really obeyed the commandment of your God.

Some Christians also need urging concerning coming out from the world and taking up the place of separation. Lot was in sinful Sodom and the great concern of the angels was to get him out of it. There are many righteous men still in Sodom–they have never thoroughly taken their place with Christ "outside the camp, bearing His reproach." Many a Christian knows that there is a higher spiritual life than he has ever yet reached. He feels that his standard is too low and that his household is too much conformed to the world in its manners and customs. He knows that his business is not conducted as his Lord and Master would wish it to be and he intends that these things shall all be set right some time or other. Possibly there is one person in the household of whom he is afraid. If that person should, in the order of God's Providence, be removed, then the way would be cleared for him to make the necessary alteration, or it may be that there is one engagement which has been made which he thinks must be fulfilled–and after that is over, things will take quite a different complexion.

My dear Brother, wherever you may be just now, I do charge you, before the living God, never trifle with your convictions and never postpone the coming away from sin and the world until it shall be more convenient for you! Do you not see what it is that you thus say to the Lord? "I will follow Jesus when it pleases me. I will follow Him when it will not cost me anything. I will follow Him when everybody will clap hands at my doing it, but when the task is difficult, I must decline it." That is very like the talk of a rebel, not like the talk of a true disciple of our blessed Lord! Oh, that you might have the Grace to say–

"'Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads,

I'll follow where He goes'–

"fashionable or unfashionable, condemned or applauded, loved or hated, I will take up the Cross for Christ and be as He would have me to be in the midst of an ungodly world." The angels are urging you to this decision, dear Brother, dear Sister, as once they urged the lingering Lot to escape from sinful Sodom!

Again, many good men need urging with regard to their attempts to be of servants to others. Lot went to his sonsin-law to try to persuade them to leave Sodom, but, though the morning light was beginning to break and Sodom's doom was imminent, he did not hurry to conduct his wife and daughters out of the doomed place. It is amazing how long Christians linger over the work of seeking the conversion of their own children. I know, dear Friend, that you

have resolved in your heart to pray with your boy–you say that you mean to do it, yet you never seem to force yourself up to the decisive point! I know, dear Mother, that you do not intend that your daughter shall go away from home until you have talked with her about her soul and set forth Christ to her. You have that new Bible ready to give to her as a kind of help to you–a thin end of the wedge–that you may have some reason for getting her alone and talking to her. But why do you keep putting it off? Should it ever be hard work for a mother to talk with her own child about her soul? Yet, to some parents, this is a very difficult task. Should it ever be hard, good woman, for a wife to put her arms about her unconverted husband's neck and plead with him to see to his soul's affairs and lay hold on eternal life? Yet perhaps you feel as if you cannot do it–you know that you ought, but you cannot. Should it ever be hard, dear Sister, for you to talk to that brother of yours, who scoffs so much at sacred things that he often hurts your feelings? I know it does seem hard, but ought it to be so? You love him and if you knew that he was in any bodily danger, you would not hesitate to warn him. And now that you know that he is in spiritual and eternal peril, do not, I pray you, delay to give the warning word.

"I mean to do it," says one. Yes, you mean to, but I want you to do it tonight! "But perhaps I may not have a suitable opportunity tonight?" Well, if there should be no opportunity tonight, you may

be excused, but do not make a pretext–let it be a genuine lack of opportunity that will excuse you and, for common humanity's sake–far more for Christ's sake, for His dear wounds sake–do immediately seek the salvation of all that are round about you! The angels urged Lot, so what can I do to urge you? You will probably find your task a great deal easier than you think and you may receive a response that you little expect! I believe that in nine cases out of ten, when a Christian begins to speak thus to his unsaved friend, the friend gratefully says, "I have long been expecting you to speak to me about my soul. How is it that you have not done it before?"

I will tell you what happened in a case with which I was personally connected. There was a young man whose minister used to come to his father's house very frequently. And this young man was in great distress of soul. Every time the minister came in, the young man used to say to himself, "I hope Mr. So-and-So will speak to me about my soul today." He put himself in the minister's way, but the minister never spoke to him as he wished and hoped. After a time, that young man went to another place of worship and there found the Lord. He told his father and the father told the minister–and then the minister came to see him and said, "My dear Brother, I am glad to hear that you have beenconverted. I have always felt anxious about you." "Have you?" asked the young man. "Yes, I have," replied the minister. "But, Sir, you never said a word

to me to show that you were anxious." There the interview ended and I am afraid that they have had little esteem for one another ever since. And I know that the young man said, "When I was converted, the minister wanted to get me into his church, but as long as I was unconverted, he never made the slightest effort to win me to Christ." I should not like to have that said of any minister here present and I should not like to hear that you are always looking after other people's sheep. There is a certain denomination which is constantly engaged in stealing the sheep that are in other flocks–it would be much better if such people would ask the Lord, by His almighty Grace to turn lions into lambs and sheep so that they might gather their own flocks! That is the proper spirit in which all Christians should act. So, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us without delay set about the task of endeavoring, in the name and in the strength of God, to bring our relatives and neighbors to the Lord Jesus Christ!

Putting a great many things under this general head, I may say that Christians need urging all round. Occasionally, I hear or read remarks about the great excitement caused by our Brothers, Moody and Sankey, in their evangelistic services, but I must confess that I have failed to see the excitement, although I have been to several of their meetings. We Londoners do not know anything about real religious excitement–we have not begun to be excited yet, though I pray God that we soon may. I would like to see such a stir all over

the metropolis, that the press would rave and rage about our fanaticism–and I shall not believe that God has done very much among us until we are accused of something like that! We are enjoying a spiritual spring time–we have heard the cuckoo and have seen one swallow, but we must not yetsay that the summer has come. Our friends from America have done something, but little compared with what we ought to desire and pray for, and expect–little, indeed, compared with what we shall see if we are but true to God. We still need the angels to come and urge lingering Lots–may we be urged ourselves!

Why is it that Christians need so mulch urging? The best answer I can make is that their spirit is willing, but their flesh is weak. Another reason is that it is easier to run fast at first than to keep on at a rapid pace. And, perhaps they have found their breath failing them. If so, may they drink in fresh air from the upper realm! Some Christians, too, are passing through the Enchanted Ground, the air of which Bunyan says made the pilgrims sleepy. Some Christians appear to have taken up their residence in that perilous place. In the case of others, the prevailing lethargy in the hearts of so many professing Christians tends to make them idle, just as in a chilly atmosphere, we are colder than we would be if our surroundings were warmer. I fear that some Christians need quickening for God's service because they have so much to do for themselves. The shop shutters are down so long that there is little time for anything but

business, and the ledger is such a big book that it quite hides the Bible! Some, on the other hand, need to be urged because they have not anything to do. Of the two things, it is better to have too much to do than to have nothing to do–and those people who do not know how to occupy their time are often the most difficult to move to anything like earnestness in spiritual things!

Whatever may be the cause of the lingering, ministers are bound to be continually urging God's people onward in the spiritual life and warfare. Under what great obligations we are Brothers! We are not our own, we are bought with a price. How much Christ has done for us, Brothers and Sisters! What manner of persons ought we to be! What a destiny awaits us! Ought we not to walk worthily of that which is to be our heritage? See how fast time is dying. We cannot make up for that which we have already lost, but let us lose no more! See how rapidly our cemeteries are being crowded and dare even to look down and see how Hell is being thronged with souls that have perished through ignorance! See how Christ's name is being constantly blasphemed and how little power the ministry of the Gospel seems to have–and what great power we find attending erroneous teaching! Oh, may God quicken us, dear Friends!

Sometimes, when I look at myself, and look at my fellow Christians, I can scarcely believe that we can be the result of such a great work as God has been carrying on. In Amsterdam I went into

workshops where great wheels and much machinery were at work cutting diamonds. They were very small things to have all that machinery operating upon them. Still, they were diamonds–and when I look at some Christians, I suppose they must be diamonds, but they appear to be very insignificant in comparison with the work which is being worked upon them! Here is Jesus Christ plowing that field with His armies, watering it with His bloody sweat, casting Himself like a seed into it–and what comes up as the result? Only that poor shriveled thing! O God, must Eternal Election and Immutable Love, and a bleeding Savior's heart, and the Omnipotence of the Holy Spirit all be set to work to produce such results as that?

God forbid that I should ever slight any of His work! The question naturally arises, "Can it be His if it only comes to that?" Here is a man who goes to a Prayer Meeting, perhaps, once in seven years, gives a four-penny piece to the collection if he has not a three-penny piece in his wallet, takes a sitting in the place of worship and then considers that all his work is done! He never opens his mouth for the Lord Jesus Christ from the first of January to the last of December! He is, at home, about as worldly as other people, yet he says that he is–

"A monument of Grace,
A sinner saved by blood!"

We have heard of mountains bringing forth mice, but we can scarcely think that Mount Zion can bring forth such creatures as these! We ought to be something better than this, Brothers and Sisters, and we must be. In the name of the dying Savior, now exalted in Heaven, whose disciples we profess to be, let us awaken ourselves and let us seek with heart and soul and strength to glorify Christ throughout the rest of life that may be allotted to us–lest we go back, dishonored, to the dust from which we sprang, after having had grand opportunities, noble possibilities and a Divine calling–and yet having lived beneath the dignity of any one of them!

II. Now I must turn to the second part of my subject, which is, that SINNERS NEED TO BE URGED AS MUCH AS SAINTS DO, for sinners, also, are very slow.

I thought, this afternoon, when my head was almost splitting with pain and I could not fix my thoughts upon my theme for this evening, "Oh, dear, dear, dear, if these sinners were only sensible, preaching would be very easy work, for all I would have to do would be just to set before them the way of salvation and they would at once walk in it!" But we have to rack our brains and to pour out our very heart in order to get you to attend to your chief business and to give heed to that which is for your lasting good! Sometimes our hearers say, "The preachers always tell us that same story and their sermons are not as polished as we would like them

to be." Ah, but if you would only believe in Jesus, and so be saved, we would polish our sermons up for you! If you would only seek and find Jesus Christ as your Savior, then we would try to give you some eloquence! But, as long as you will not have Christ and resolve to remain as you are, the only thing we can do is to keep on persuading, entreating and even compelling you to come in to the great Gospel feast! We are obliged to put the old Truth of God in very much the same old way. It is not poetical work to be a Royal Humane Society's officer, seeking to pull drowning people out of the river–and there is not much poetry about our work in trying to be the means of saving your souls!

But what makes you men and women so slow to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ which is the only way of salvation? Are you so fond of your sins that you are not willing to give them up, or are you really so self-righteous that you do not believe that you need to be saved? I think the most of you do believe, in a way, that there is a Hell–and that you will go there unless you are converted. But you do not really believe it because you do not realize what it means. You are very earnestly listening to me just now, but if somebody over there by the door were to cry out because a piece of plaster had dropped off the ceiling, how wide awake you would become compared with what you are now when I am talking about your going to Hell and being lost forever! Somehow or other, there is a lack of reality about you when spiritual matters are being

discussed. I fear that the same spirit is getting into some good people's prayers. We do not pray real prayers, at least not as real as they ought to be. I do try to preach to you as if I meant it and I would willingly lay down my life if, by doing so, I could save you. Yet you listen to me as if it were merely a very proper thing for me to preach and for you to hear on Sunday–but as if you had nothing to do with the Gospel on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday!

You hear that the city in which you are dwelling is to be destroyed. You do not tell the angel that the prophecy is a lie, but you sit down so comfortably that it is clear that you do not believe it. Or if you do, you need to be pressed again, and again, and again to act as if it were true. Just now, as you took your seat, you missed a diamond ring off your finger and you will not be at all comfortable until you get home and see if it is there. You are concerned about the loss of a ring, yet your souls are lost and you are quite unconcerned about them. This terrible truth does not fret and worry you! I wish it would, so that you would say, "I will never rest till I know that I am saved through Jesus Christ the Savior." Surely, madness is bound up in the heart of sinners or else they would not need to be urged to escape.

"Well," say some of you, "we intend to think about this matter." I know you do and that thought of yours is Satan's biggest net. He has a number of nets of different sorts and sizes–some of them are

only meant for eagles and he does not often use them, for there are not many eagles about. But he has a big net which he uses for catching small birds. I picture the great enemy of souls going out with his big net and I fancy I can hear him whistling with unholy glee at the thought of the many birds he will take in it. This is the style of his temptation–you are not to quibble at the Truth of God. You are e not to be an avowed infidel. You are not to despise the Savior, you are not to say that the salvation of your soul is an unimportant matter, but you are to say to the minister, "Yes, Sir, what you preach is all very true and I am glad you put it in the way that you do. I like earnest preaching! I like to be told personally about my need of salvation and I will attend to the matter very soon–tomorrow, if possible. Oh, I just remembered there is something on that day which will be rather in the way, but, as soon as that is over, I will give heed to what you say." That is just what has happened a long while with some of you, but you are no nearer the deciding point.

A gentleman in this neighborhood told me that he could not come to hear me preach again. I asked him, "Why is that?" "Well," he answered, "I only came once and then you pointed me out and said, 'There sits a gray-headed old fool.' At least, you said that a gray-headed old sinner is a gray-headed old fool." "Well," I said, "I do not remember seeing you before, but are you a gray-headed old sinner? Because, if you are, then you are the other thing as well."

He just looked at me and said nothing, and I have not seen him since that time. I am afraid there are others here to whom I might say just the same and it would be true. They must be foolish, for they have not done what they have admitted it would be wise for them to do! Again and again, a man has said, “I will do it.” Now, Sir, you are a fool to say, “I will do it,” if it was a foolish thing! But if it was a wise thing and you said, “I will do it,” yet you have not done it, what are you?

Some of you are good arithmeticians–will you take your pencils and work out a sum for me? Here is a man of 50 years of age, and I want you to calculate the probabilities of his ever being saved. He had an excellent early training from a very godly father and mother whose many prayers for him he cannot forget, though he remained unsaved in spite of them all. He went to a Sunday school and had a very gracious teacher who set him a good example and was very earnest in pleading with him–but he would not yield. As he grew up, he had many Christian friends who wrote letters to him and used every possible opportunity to impress him. He resisted all that and for 20 years attended the ministry of a very earnest preacher. There was a great revival and many were saved, but he was not one of them. Since then, he has been sitting under another very faithful minister of God’s Word and he has been impressed again and again. Put that down and figure it out if you can. He has been impressed 50 times, or a hundred, perhaps 200 times and he has got over all

that. What are the probabilities that he will ever be saved? To tell you the truth, I greatly fear that the probability is that the man will be lost, that he never will be converted, but will continue as he has already been despite every instrumentality that has been employed on his behalf.

O you Sinners, with such terrible probabilities against you, you do, indeed, need to be urged and gladly would we put our hands upon you and urge you to escape for your lives, and to do it now, for it is now or never with some of you who are present here tonight! I have no doubt that if we could read the past history of some who are here, we would see abundant reasons for urging them to immediate decision. I have already shown you where these reasons would be found and the probabilities against their conversion. But, as to the future, happily that is hidden from all of us. I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet and, therefore, I shall not attempt to utter a prediction. But you all must know that out of some 6,000 persons assembled here, there is a great probability that we shall not all be alive next Lord's Day. It is a certainty that we shall never, all of us, meet here again, and the probability that some of us will have gone from this earth before next Sabbath is very great. In the membership of this Church, I notice, as regularly as the year rolls around, that our death-list comes to between 50 and seventy. There is usually one death a week or, if there should happen to be one week in which a member of the Church does not

die, there will be two or three in the week following. The average is one a week so that if not out of this present assembly, yet out of the usual congregation at this Tabernacle, it is a certainty that two will die in a week. Two, in a week!

I wonder where the two victims for this week are? Perhaps at home, dying by degrees, with a good hope in Jesus Christ. Blessed be God if that is the case! We will shout the harvest home as they are gathered in! Possibly they are lying at home sick, yet without hope. Let us pray for them if that is their condition. Lord, help them to believe in Jesus Christ this very night, before they tread death's awful road, O Lord, save them! But perhaps one out of the two may be here, in good health, and unconverted. I am not saying what is at all improbable, am I? It may be so and if I knew that someone here would die before next Sabbath, I would beg him to stay after the service, that I might give him a squeeze of the hand and say to him, "My dear Friend, do not let this day go by without your looking to Christ and committing your soul into His hands." Now, as I do not know who it is to be, give me your hands, all of you, all around the building. I should like to look you dear men and women in the face and say to each one of you, "Now, dear Soul, do not live and die without the Savior! Do lay this matter to heart. I am not an angel, but I am one who would gladly do you good. If it is right to believe in Jesus Christ, the sooner you do it, the better. And if it is right to love and serve God, the sooner you do it, the

better. And if to trust in Christ's precious blood is the only safe course, the sooner you do that, the better. May the eternal Spirit come and lead you, even now, to lay hold on Jesus Christ and find eternal life in Him this very hour!"

Now, look me in the face and say whether it shall be so or not. I will not ask you to speak–there will be too much noise if you all do so. But in your heart, I ask you to speak. Will you, or will you not? This may be the turning point in your life's history. There is a spot, under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, where there is a mark made by the chisel of a man who fell from the top and was killed. There is also a mark, which angel eyes can see, in that pew, or in that aisle, or up in that gallery where you have sat and said, "Not, tonight. I will decide tomorrow." Or where you have said, "No, I will not have anything to do with Christ." I wish that instead of such a mark as that, there could be a star etched into the floor which would mean, "Here, a poor soul believed in Jesus."

I know a little Primitive Methodist chapel in Colchester. I went to see it some time ago and I went into the very pew where I sat, as a boy 15 years of age, and heard a sermon from the text, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." I should have liked to buy the seat and take it home, for I love the spot where Jesus met with me and saved me. And there are some of you who feel like that concerning these pews. They are very sacred to you and always will be, for there you were born for God! Oh, that some

of you might be born here this very night! Some of you are in no need of instruction–you need urging. You do not need to be impressed concerning the guilt of your sins so much as to be urged to give them up and to put your trust in Jesus Christ! You do not need to be brought to the water so much as to be made to drink of it. There it is. Oh, that you would open your mouths and let the blessed stream flow in, for that is all that is needed! Receive Christ! Receive Christ now, by a simple act of faith, and He will give you Grace and strength to battle with your sins and to make you holy. Oh, that now, now, NOW, the great work may be done!

I do not suppose you can hear this clock tick, but when you get home, listen to your old clock on the stairs, or in your room, and it will say to you, "Now, now, now, now." I have sometimes thought that in the night I have heard the clock say, "Now or never! Now or never! Now or never! Now or never! Now or never!" You need not listen to me any longer, but listen to that message from the clock.

May the Holy Spirit speak to you through it, and may you answer, "Now, even now, I will believe in Jesus Christ and be saved." May God bless you! May Christ save you! Amen.

Ge 19:16 • Dangerous Lingering

SERMON 3450

D*angerous Lingering*

"He lingered."

Genesis 19:16

LOT was highly favored. In the midst of a general destruction, angels were sent to take care of him. He had received a warning which many had not heard–and he had felt the terror that warning would excite–while some who had heard the tidings little heeded their imminent moment. Lot stood in the condition of one who knew that he must leave the city, for it was about to be destroyed. He intended to leave it. He was just about to take his departure, but, nevertheless, hesitated a little, halted a while, avoided hurry, protracted his stay with some attachment to the place where he had

dwelt, and so, in the face of danger, he hesitated. Being slow to move when fully aware that judgment was swift to overtake, “He lingered.” I believe Lot to be in this respect the exact counterpart of a great many hearers of the Gospel. They understand at least its threats. They know something about the way of escape. They have resolved to follow that way and they intend to do so very soon. Yet for a long time they have halted on the verge of decision, almost persuaded to be Christians. Strong as their resolution to become followers of the Savior seems to be, unhappily they stop short, they linger in their old condition–halting between two opinions. To such persons I propose to address a few words of exhortation this evening. First of all, to expostulate with you personally upon personal mattersThen to speak to you about others, for I have the full conviction that the man who lingers puts others in danger as well as himself, just as Lot’s lingering was hazardous to his daughters and to his wife. And lastly, to commend the means which I trust God will use tonight,similar to those which He used with Lot, that some angelic hand or some Providential force may lay hold upon the lingerer, that he may be brought out from the City of Destruction and made to flee for help to Christ the Lord. I must begin by speaking to–

THE PERSON WHO IS LINGERING.

I would like to be looked upon, just now, less as a preacher than as a friend who is talking to the lingering one, the one almost

decided–talking to him in the most familiar tones, but, at the same time, with the most earnest purpose. There are certain thoughts which have been, and are still fermenting in my soul. I have heard that a conclave was held in pandemonium. In the lower regions Satan had called together all the devils who showed him allegiance and he said to them, "I want one of you to go forth as a lying spirit from this place to deceive many. The Gospel is being faithfully preached and men are being won to Christ, my rival. Spirits of the infernal pit, I desire your help that this Gospel may not spread further! I pause while each one of you, my liege servants, shall tell me of the devices you will use to prevent men from fleeing to Christ. His device that shall seem wisest to my subtlety shall be most fully employed among the sons of men." Then one spoke and said, "O Prince of the infernal pit, I will go forth and tell men that there is no God, no Heaven, no Hell, no hereafter." But the arch-fiend said, "It is in vain! The Gospel has already gone so far with the men of whom I am now thinking, that this would not be of use. They know there is a God–they are sure of it. The testimony which has been borne in the world has brought so much Light into it that they cannot close their eyes to the fact–your device, though admirable, will not succeed." Then up rose another, and he said, "I shall insinuate doubts as to the authenticity of Scripture. I shall belie the teachings of the Doctrines of the Word of God, and so shall I keep them from Christ." But again the leader of that

conclave objected that this would scarcely suffice, for the multitude had so heard the Gospel. And those whose conversion he was most anxious to prevent were so conversant with its historical facts, that they could not seriously question them. Neither could they live in systematic doubt who had been schooled in positive belief. There were many devices, but I will tell you which most of all struck Satan, which he determined to use most among the sons of men. It was this–one foul spirit said, "I will not insinuate doubts about the existence of God or the truth of Scripture. I know it would not be of any use. But this thing I will do–I will tell men that, though these things are true and important, there is no hurry about them, there is time enough and to spare–that they may wait a little till there is a more convenient season, and then shall they attend to them." Now the subtlety of Satan was pleased with this, and he said, "Servant, go your way! You have invented the net in which the fowler shall take more birds then in any other. Good speed to your enterprise. This deadly poison will destroy innumerable souls!"

Feeling this to be the case, it shall be my earnest endeavor to tear that net to pieces and to expose this poison, that none may be entangled unawares and perish unwarned!

Coming back, then, to the purpose with which I started, earnestly and personally to speak to the lingerer, I would like to ask you, my beloved Friend, if this matter about which you are still hesitating is not of vital importance to you? Itconcerns your soul, yourself, your

true self! It deals with your destiny, your impending, your eternal destiny! You are immortal–you acknowledge a deathless principle within you–and you are conscious that you shall live forever in happiness or woe. Do you think you ought to put off all preparation for the future that awaits you? If I knew that someone was about to defraud you of your estate, and that unless you were diligent about it you would lose all your property, I think I would say to you, "Bestir yourself!" If I knew that some deadly disease had begun to prey on your constitution and that, if neglected, it would soon gain an ascendancy with which it were hard to grapple, I think I would say, "Go to the physician. Do not delay, for bodily health is very precious." But, dear Friend, if your estate is precious, much more your soul! And if the health of this poor clay ought to be looked to, much more the welfare of your soul–the welfare of your soul forever! Do you not think, if anything should be postponed, it should be something of less importance? Was not Christ right when He said, "Seek, first, the Kingdom of God and His righteousness"? Does not your reason agree that He was right in putting that first? I shall not need to argue with you. I speak as to a man who has his wits about him. Is it not so? Suppose you look to getting on in the world, first–you may die and be lost before you have got on! Suppose the taking of a degree at the university should be your first concern–that would be a poor recompense. The honors of learning could not mitigate the terrors of judgment! Do you not feel now (if

you will let your better nature speak) that the very first thing a man should see to should be this–to be reconciled to God and be all right with Him for eternity?

I will then ask you another question–is there anything so very pleasant in a state of enmity to God, that you should wish to remain in it? Why should Lot want to linger in Sodom? He had often been vexed there. The very night, before, he had his house beset with rioters! Why should he want to linger? Have you found any great comfort in being undecided? Is there anything very fascinating in remaining hesitant and halting between two opinions? Dear Friend, if your condition is at all like what mine was before I believed in Jesus, I know you would be glad enough to get out of it! Oh, how earnest I was, sometimes, in seeking Christ! Oh, how wretched I was at other times that I could not find Him! Then, again, I was stupidly senseless about Divine things, and my self-upbraiding would not let me be at peace. It is a most unhappy condition to be in–to have Light enough to know that you are in the dark and no more–to have just enough Grace to feel that you have not the Grace that can save you–to be enough awakened to feel that if you remain as you are, you must perish forever! I do not see anything in this hesitating condition that should allure you to keep in it any longer than you can help. Beloved Friends, have you ever seriously weighed–if not I will ask you to do so–the solemnity of the destruction which must come upon you if you are not decidedly a

Believer in Christ and, on the other hand, the unspeakable glory and bliss which will belong to you if you are led to trust in Jesus and are saved?

I can scarcely give you the details of a little incident in Russian history which might illustrate the emergency. The Czar had died suddenly and in the dead of night one of the counselors of the empire came to the Princess Elizabeth and said to her, ‘You must come at once and take possession of the crown.“ She hesitated, for there were difficulties in the way, and she did not desire the position. But he said, "Now sit down, Princess, for a minute,” Then he drew her two pictures. One was the picture of herself and the Count thrown into prison, racked with tortures, and presently both brought out to die beneath the axe. “That,” he said, “you can have if you like.” The other picture was of herself with the imperial crown of all of Russia on her brow, and all the princes bowing before her, and all the nation doing her homage. “That,” said he, “is the other side of the question. But, tonight, your Majesty must choose which it shall be.” With the two pictures vividly depicted before her mind’s eye, she did not hesitate long, but cast in her choice for the crown. Now I would gladly paint for you two such pictures, only I lack the skill. You will either sink forever down in deeper and yet deeper woe, filled with remorse because you brought it all upon yourself, or else, if you decide for Christ and rest in Him, you shall enter the bliss of those who forever and

forever without admixture of grief enjoy happiness before the Throne of God! To my mind there ought to be no halting as to the choice. It should be made. I pray God's Holy Spirit to help you to make it tonight! On this winged hour, eternity is hung. The choice of this night may be the cooling of the wax which now is soft. Once cooled, it will bear the impress throughout eternity! God grant it may be a resolve for Christ, for His cause, for His Cross, for His crown!

I would like still, dear Friend, to hold you by the button which I laid hold of just now, and to say to you, What is itthat has kept you waiting so long? Did I not meet you some years ago in the street, and you said to me, "Sir, I have been a hearer of yours for many years." And I said, "Oh, yes, and when did you join the Church?" And you said, "Ah, I have never done that." And I asked, "Why not?" And you were honest enough to say, "Because I am afraid I should be very much out of place there, for I am not a Believer in Christ." Do you recollect how I squeezed your hand and said, "Ah, I hope it will not be long before you give your heart to the Lord," and you said, "Well, I hope so, too"? It is a good long while now– and you have been getting gray since then. I dare say if I saw you tonight and put the same question to you, you would make the same reply! And in ten years, time, if you and I live, we shall be still relatively in the same position–I still pleading, and you still saying–"yes, yes, yes, it is very right." No, no, I answer, it is very

wrong, that consenting without complying, not doing what the Gospel bids you do, yielding and resisting, as it were, by turns. Repenting and then forgetting. “Forgetting?” Yes, forgetting, and forgetting, till these delays will cast you into irrevocable ruin! What is it you are waiting on, my Friend? Is there some sin you cannot give up? What sin is worth being damned for? If there is one, keep on with it. I defy you to defend your negligence! Put it to this test–if there is any supposable delight that is worth the endurance of eternal wrath, pursue that delight, however sensual it may be, with avidity! But if there is not, do not play the fool or act the madman! Do I hear you plead ignorance? I would make some excuse for you, if I thought the plea was just and true, but suppose for a minute that it is so? Then, dear Friend, ought not you to begin to search the Scriptures? Should not you be making intensely earnest enquiries that you might know the certainty of these things? For the soul to be without knowledge is not good. But if you are perishing for lack of knowledge, there certainly is no reason why you should! Many of us would only be too delighted if we might tell you still more fully what is the way of salvation. “Well, but it is inconvenient just now!” Are you promising yourself a more favorable opportunity? Let me ask you, Do you imagine you will be any better off tomorrow than you are today? Do you think in ten years' time you will be more likely to lay hold on Christ than you are now? I do not think you will. Have you ever seen sponges that

have been turned into flints? Well, that is a slow process–it takes a long time. The same process, however, is gradually happening to you. Every year you are getting more flinty. The drip, drip, drip of this world's care and sin is petrifying you! You are getting stony. It strikes me the best time to repent in is this moment–and the very best season in which to fly to Jesus is now! Before yet the clock has ticked again, your heart will have grown more callous. It certainly does not soften. When will there be any influence more potent than there is now to help you? The Spirit of God is ready now. Do you need more than His power? The blood of Christ is a full Atonement for sin. Do you need anything more than that for your salvation? Do you expect Christ to come down again on earth to save you? Do you need any promise fuller than that which the Bible has in it now, or any invitation more gracious than that which the Gospel gives to you now–"Today is the accepted time: today is the day of salvation." I pray you, my lingering Friend, linger no longer! Oh, how I wish I could put my hands in yours and lead you to the Savior! But I cannot. I will, however, pray Him to lead you this very night!

"I will think of it," you say. No, that is the very thing I do not want you to do! I want you to believe in Jesus now,and not talk about thinking of it tomorrow. In your seat, if you will rest in Jesus, and trust your soul in His hands, you are saved this very moment! It is an instantaneous work–

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Salvation in full through His blood!"

Oh, that you would exercise that simple faith, now, and not talk about thinking of it tomorrow, for tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, alas, tomorrow never comes! It is in no calendar, except the almanac of fools! Each day to the wise man is today as it comes. The fool wastes today, and so wastes all his life. O Lingerer, I beseech you, think now of the long time you have lingered. It may well suffice you–it has surely been long enough, and I would say to you, in the words of one of old, "How long halt you between two opinions?" And quote the saying of yet another, "Choose you this day whom you will serve." And may God the Holy Spirit guide the choice, and He shall have the praise!

Now I need to speak a little upon another topic.

II. I REMIND THE LINGERER THAT WHILE HE LINGERS, HE ENDANGERS THE SOULS OF OTHER PEOPLE.

When Lot went to his sons-in-law and told them that the city was to be destroyed, "he was to them as one that mocked." How would they say to him, "Go to, old dotard! Do you think we believe you? The sky is clear and blue, and the sun has risen–dot you think we believe your nonsense about fire and brimstone coming out of Heaven? We don't believe you." When Lot lingered, he was

defeating his own purpose and doing the worst imaginable thing, if he wanted to convince his sons-in-law that he spoke the truth, for while he lingered, they would say, “The old fool does not believe it, himself, for if he did believe it, he would pack up and hasten away! No, he would take his daughters by the hand and lead than out of the city at once.” A little hesitancy in the conduct of a man who said that he believed a dreadful judgment was imminent would be sufficient to give them umbrage–quite reason enough to make them say, “He does not believe, himself, what he tells us.” Have not some of you spoken seriously to others about the value of their souls, though you are not saved? Did you try the other day to rebuke a swearer? I am glad you did. You are a member of a Temperance Association and you do what you can to stop drunkenness. I am glad you do. You will not allow sin to pass unrebuked in your presence. But, listen, Man, with what face do you reprove others while you are not decided yourself? Where is your consistency? If they should turn round on you and say, “If there is anything reliable in the Grace of God, why are you not reconciled to Him? If there is anything desirable in religion, why do you not walk according to its precepts? If Christ is a Savior, why do you not yield to Him and obey His ordinances?” I know not what answer you could give! I cannot imagine any response but a blush that should betoken your shame and confusion of face!

The mischief that Lot did to his daughters was yet more aggravated, for all the while he was hesitating, they weresure to hesitate, too. He was keeping them waiting. They were in jeopardy as well as himself. How many comrades, young Man, you might have instructed in the faith before now had you been yourself decided? It is a happy circumstance when a young married couple become converted to God before their little ones are able to imitate a bad example. I thank God for a father whom I know and honor–that of his children there is only one that can recollect the time when the evening was spent in playing cards–and that one recollects the night when the cards were all thrown into the fire and burnt! Only one of his children recollects when the Sabbath was known to be spent in quiet walks and pleasant recreations, but not in public worship or private devotion. He recollects the rearing of the family altar, when prayer was made a household institution. He can well remember the earnest entreaties made that the father's sin might not be visited upon the children. Oh, happy circumstance! Had the parents been converted later in life, the ill example might never have been wiped out! The converted father might have found that the children did not emulate the good example of his regenerate state, but did rather imitate him in the negligence and sinfulness of his natural unrenewed life. When you, who are parents, habitually demur and hesitate, do you not think that other members of your family will hesitate, too? I have noticed it

frequently, where there is a man or a woman knowing the Truth of God in a measure, but not decided. It almost always happens that when the husband or the wife is in the same condition, the moment the father gets savingly converted, the wife comes and avows her faith. Not infrequently the children follow suit! It only needed somehow, in God's Providence, the decision of the head of the household! This has led the others to decision. It becomes, therefore, a very mournful reflection that there should be men and women lingering upon the brink of the grave who are helping others to linger–their example being the means of keeping others in a state of perilous hazard! You must know, many of you, that it is so with you! Therefore, I shall leave the Truth to weigh upon your conscience, hoping it will stir you up to decision.

Let me venture to make one other observation here. I should not wonder if, perhaps, the death of Lot's wife mightpartly be attributed to Lot, himself. If you think that this is a severe reflection, I would remind you that she must have seen her husband hesitate. She was a woman far lower down in the scale than he was–when, therefore, she saw him lingering, it was no wonder if that contagious example led her to look back. Perhaps among the regrets of Lot throughout the rest of his life, there would be this one, "I did not hurry myself out of that city as I should. I was in no hurry. I tarried, and lingered, and paused. I had almost to be dragged out by the angels' hands." And this, it may be, led Lot's

wife to look back with lingering–and then to be turned into a pillar of salt. O undecided Man! I would not like you to feel that the blood of your wife was on your skirts. O undecided Father! I would dread to have you think, in years to come, “The loss of my children’s souls was due to my procrastination.” Alas, it may be so–it may be so! Therefore now, with a Brother’s earnest affection, let me come to you and say, “You intend to believe. You have resolved to be a Christian. You are no Atheist, and no scoffer. You are not hardened and rebellious–your heart is soft and tender and ready for these things–then yield it now, yield it up completely this night to that dear hand that once was crucified! That hand shall mold you according to its own will. Thus says the Spirit of God to you tonight, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, for, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” He that believes not–though he may have resolved to believe, if he dies believing not–must be damned! Our last word was to be this–

III. LET US PRAY FOR THE LINGERERS, that they may by some means be hastened. I do not expect to see angels come walking down these aisles, or threading their way through these pews tonight. But I do trust that a messenger from God will come, notwithstanding that. Sometimes lingerers have been quickened and decided by their own reflections being blessed to them by the Holy Spirit. A very simple observation was once the means of deciding a man. He was a mechanic and a man of a mathematical

turn of mind. He had attended a meeting. The meeting was held in an upper room, and going below the stairs, his attention was attracted by the beam that had supported the people, and he said to himself, “What a weight there must have been upon that!” Just at that very minute, into his mind there flashed, “And what a weight there is resting upon you!” How that thought followed the other, I cannot tell, but as he turned it over, it did seem to him that he had a weight of sin enough to crush him–that he could not bear up under such a weight as that–and that his soul would come down in ruin like many a building whose beams have not been strong enough and have, at last, given way. I mind not what form the thought may take–I only pray that some such thought may come home and decide you!

Occasionally, a good man has been the means of suggesting the deciding thought. A smith was blowing his bellows in a smithy one day, when the saintly McCheyne stepped into the smithy for a shelter from a shower of rain. As the smith was blowing the coals and they were at a great heat, he simply said to him, “What does that fire make you think of?” He never gave an answer–and McCheyne went his way. It made the smith think of the wrath to come, and it made him flee from it, too! We cannot tell what may be, in the gracious Providence of God, the means of bringing you to decision. He that used an angel’s hand with Lot, can use a well-timed observation with you. Therefore I urge all Christian people to

use every opportunity and study to season their conversation with Divine Grace! Sow beside all waters, for you know not which may prosper–this or that. Sometimes men have been decided by the deaths of their relatives or their friends. “I may be the next,” has been suggested to them. When the dear child has been buried, it has made the afflicted father reflect that he shall never meet it in Heaven unless he mends his ways. So, too, the bereaved mother, in the bitterness of her heart, has sought a Savior in the hope that she might meet her baby, again, in the better land. Such things are good. They are blessed deaths that bring eternal life to the survivors! These little ones well spend their lives in winging their flight to Paradise and showing us the way. But surely, dear Friend, you don’t require a distressing visitation to decide you! I trust your heart will be given to Christ without the dire necessity that you should lose those you love on earth.

Occasionally, and very occasionally, persons have been decided by personal sickness. Some, but oh, how few, have witnessed the good confession in the hour of death. A soldier in the army of the Potomac, of whom I somewhere read, was taken to the rear to die. He was badly wounded. He was also suffering from fever. Someone had told him, just before the fever came on, of a soldier found asleep at his post who was condemned to die. The poor fellow, in his delirium, imagining that he was that soldier, cried out to the doctor who was attending him, “Sir, I am to be shot

tomorrow morning, and as I wish to have all right, I want you to send for the chaplain at once. I need to see him." The doctor, to calm his fears, said. "No, no, you are not to be shot tomorrow morning. It's a mistake." "Oh, but I am," he said, "I know I shall." "But I will be here," said the doctor, "and if anyone comes to touch you, I will have him arrested. I will take care you shall not die." "Is it so, Doctor?" he said, in calmer accents, "then you need not send for the chaplain. I shall not need him just yet." So the truth came out that fear, not faith, animated him, though it was but spoken in a feverish fit. How many men, if they thought they were going to die, would say, "Oh, yes, let all be said and done that it is right to say and do!" But persuade them that they are likely to live a little longer, they will wait and adjourn their faith while they can calm their fear. Not very often is the decision genuine which men arrive at under the stress of that fear which comes of impending dissolution. May God's spirit deepen in some here present their sense of sin! May your crimes sting you. May you feel your guilt. May you hate yourselves because of your transgressions. May you be distressed because of your ingratitude, your disobedience, your unbelief! Then you will long to get rid of this horrible evil, this enmity against God! May you feel tonight what a mischievous thing it is for the creature to be at variance with his Creator, for man to be out of order with his God! What a shameful thing it is for the most favored of creatures to be unfriendly to the Sovereign that

favors him! What an incredible thing it is, that while the ox knows its owner and the ass its master's crib, man, the object of Divine Love, should not know his Lord, his Friend, his Benefactor! Oh, may you give no rest to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids till you have opened your mouth to profess the name of the Lord and fled for refuge to take hold of His righteousness and strength! Oh, that you might be too agitated to sleep till you have confessed your sin into the ear of the Great Elder Brother, and sought pardon from your God through Christ your Savior. There is forgiveness, there is mercy to be had–to be had now! Whoever believes in Christ Jesus shall be saved! Believing is trusting, relying in simple but sincere dependence. May His Grace enable you to cast yourselves upon His mercy and credit His promise in this good hour, so you shall be this night enrolled among the saved, and He shall have all the praise! The Lord grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Ge 19:16 • Lingerers Hastened

SERMON 0789

L*ingerers Hastened*

"And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters the Lord being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him outside the city."

Genesis 19:16

EVEN as Lot lingered in Sodom, awakened sinners are apt to tarry long in their sin and unbelief. Some few are suddenly brought to Christ, and, like Saul of Tarsus, within a few hours enjoy complete Gospel liberty. But many others are unwise children and tarry long in the place of danger, loitering where they ought to hasten and wasting time which they should diligently redeem. It is

angelic work to quicken those who linger. The angels who descended to earth in the disguise of wayfarers did not disdain to be employed in such a gracious office, and, if you and I would be like angels, we must do as they did–take procrastinating sinners by the hand and endeavor to compel them to escape–constraining them to flee from the wrath to come.

It is a sign of God's great mercy to any soul when it has an anxious friend to quicken its pace heavenward and Christward. So the text tells us, "The Lord being merciful unto him." Let no unconverted person think it an annoyance to be rebuked for his sin or to be frequently exhorted to lay hold on eternal life. It is a great loving-kindness from the Father of mercies to be beset by the persevering earnestness of believing friends. Look upon it in that light, O young man, over whom a mother yearns anxiously, for, if God's longsuffering in bearing with you should lead you to repentance, much more should this kindness in sending you a compassionate friend constrain you to yield your heart to Him. Bless God every day for kind-hearted relatives who labor to guide you to the Lord Jesus! You cannot have a greater blessing.

I thought, this morning, that perhaps the Lord might make me to some of you the angel of mercy by enabling me to lead you out of the Sodom of your sins and to conduct you into a state of present salvation. Oh, how I long for this with eagerness of desire! Happy shall I be if I may win your souls, and, while you will rejoice in the

mercy given, I shall rejoice exceedingly in being the instrument of it by the power of the Spirit. First, I shall address a few words, this morning, to God's messengers, and then, secondly, to those who linger.

First, I have to speak TO GOD'S MESSENGERS. I hope they are very numerous in this Church. Every Believer should be an ambassador from Heaven. "As my Father has sent Me," said the Well-Beloved, "even so send I you." You are sent, my Brethren, to gather together the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and, like your Master, to seek and to save that which is lost. I speak solemnly to you who have wept over Jerusalem and who are prying your true love to souls by your exertions for them. And I remind you, in the first place, that it is a glorious work to seek to save men and that for its sake you should be witting to put up with the greatest possible inconveniences.

The angels never hesitated when they were bid to go to Sodom. They descended without demur and went about their work without delay. Although the report of Sodom's detestable iniquity had gone up to Heaven and the Lord would bear no longer with that filthy city, yet, from the purity of Heaven, the angels did not hesitate to descend to behold the infamy of Sodom. Where God sent them they failed not to go. Note how the chapter before us begins. I have thought it might be applied to the holy laborers in the dark lanes, and courts, and houses of infamy in this city. "There came two

angels to Sodom at even." What? Angels? Did angels come to Sodom? To Sodom, and yet angels? Yes, and none the less angelic because they came to Sodom, but all the more so, because in unquestioning obedience to their Master's high behests they sought out the elect one and his family, to deliver him and his from impending destruction.

However near to Christ you may be, however much your character may be like that of your Lord, you who are called to such service, must never say, "I cannot talk to these people–they are so depraved and debased. I cannot enter that because you are there wanted, men of God, you must there be found! To whom should the physician go but to the sick, and where can the distributor of the alms of mercy find such a fitting sphere as among those whose spiritual destitution is extreme? Be you angels of mercy each one of you and God speed you in your soul-saving work.

As you have received Christ Jesus into your hearts, so imitate Him in your lives. Let the woman that is a sinner receive your kindness, for Jesus looked on her with mercy. Let the man who has been most mad with wickedness be sought after, for Jesus healed demoniacs. Let no type of sin, however terrible, be thought by you to be beneath your pity, or beyond your labor. Seek out those who have wandered farthest and snatch from the flame the firebrands which are already smoking in it!

Note again–I still speak to those who are messengers of God to men's souls–when you go to lost souls, you must, as these angels did, let them plainly see their condition and their danger. "Up," they said, "for God will destroy this place." If you really long to save men's souls, you must tell them a great deal of disagreeable Truths of God. The preaching of the wrath of God has come to be sneered at nowadays, and even good people are half ashamed of it. A mushy sentimentality about love and goodness has hushed, in a great measure, plain Gospel expostulations and warnings. But, my Brothers, if we expect souls to be saved we must declare unflinchingly, with all affectionate fidelity, the terrors of the Lord.

"Well," said the Scotch lad when he listened to the minister who told his congregation that there was no Hell, or at any rate only a temporary punishment. "Well," said he, "I need not come and hear this man any longer, for if it is as he says, it is all right, and religion is of no consequence. And if it is not as he says, then I must not hear him again, because he will deceive me." "Therefore," says the Apostle, "Knowing the terrors of the Lord we persuade men." Let not modern squeamishness prevent plain speaking concerning everlasting torment. Are we to be more gentle than the Apostles? Shall we be wiser than the inspired preachers of the Word of God? Until we feel our minds overshadowed with the dread thought of the sinner's doom we are not in a fit frame for preaching to the

unconverted. We shall never persuade men if we are afraid to speak of the judgment and the condemnation of the unrighteous.

There was none so infinitely gracious as our Lord Jesus Christ, yet no preacher ever uttered more faithful words of thunder than He did. It was He who spoke of the place "where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched." It was He who said, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." It was He who spoke the parable concerning that man in Hell who longed for a drop of water to cool his tongue. We mast be as plain as Christ was–as downright in honesty to the souls of men–or we may be called to account for our treachery at the last. If we flatter our fellows into fond dreams as to the littleness of future punishment, they will eternally detest us for so deluding them–and in the world of woe they will invoke perpetual curses upon us for having prophesied smooth things, and having withheld from them the Truth of God.

When we have affectionately and plainly told the sinner that the wages of his sin will be death and that woe will come upon him because of his unbelief, we must go farther, and must, in the name of our Lord Jesus, exhort the guilty one to escape from the deserved destruction. Observe that these angels, though they understood that God had elected Lot to be saved, did not omit a single exhortation or leave the work to itself, as though it were to be done by predestination apart from instrumentality. They said,

“Arise, take your wife and your two daughters which are here, lest you be consumed.”

How impressive is each admonition! What force and eagerness of love gleams in each entreaty! “Escape for your life! Look not behind you! Neither stay you in all the plain! Escape to the mountain lest you be consumed.” Every word is quick and powerful, decisive and to the point. Souls need much earnest expostulation and affectionate exhortation to constrain them to escape from their own ruin. Were they wise, the bare information of their danger would be enough and the prospect of a happy escape would be sufficient. But they, as they are utterly unwise, as you and I know–for we were once such as they are–they must he urged, persuaded and entreated to look to the Crucified that they may be saved! We would never have come to Christ unless Divine constraint had been laid upon us, and neither will they.

That constraint usually comes by instrumentality–let us seek to be such instruments. If it had not been for earnest voices that spoke to us and earnest teachers that beckoned us to come to the Cross, we would never have come. Let us, therefore, repay the debt we owe to the Church of God and seek as much as lies in us to do unto others as God in His mercy has done unto us. I beseech you, my Brothers, be active to persuade men with all your powers of reasoning and argument, salting the whole with tears of affection. Do not let any doctrinal notions stand in the way of the freest persuading when

you are dealing with the minds of men, for sound doctrine is perfectly reconcilable therewith.

I remember great complaint being made against a sermon of mine, “Compel Them to Come In,” [Volume 5, Sermon #227–read or download it at] in which I spoke with munch tenderness for souls. That sermon was said to be Arminian and unsound. Brethren, it is a small matter to be judged of men’s judgment, for my Master set His seal on that message. I never preached a sermon by which so many souls were won to God, as our Church meetings can testify! And all over the world, where the sermon has been scattered, sinners have been saved through its instrumentality, and, therefore, if it is vile to exhort sinners, I purpose to be viler still!

I am as firm a Believer in the Doctrines of Grace as any man living, and a true Calvinist after the order of John Calvin himself–but if it is thought an evil thing to bid the sinner lay hold on eternal life–I will be yet more evil in this respect! And I will herein imitate my Lord and His Apostles, who, though they taught that salvation is of Divine Grace, and Grace alone, feared not to speak to men as rational beings and responsible agents, and bid them, “strive to enter in at the strait gate,” and, “labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life.” Beloved Friends, cling to the great Truth of electing love and Divine Sovereignty, but let not this bind you in fetters when, in the power of the Holy Spirit, you become fishers of men.

Learn, still further, from the case before us that where words suffice not, as they frequently will not, you must adopt other modes of pressure. The angel took them by the hand. I have much faith under God in close dealings with men. Personal entreaties, by the power of the Holy Spirit, do wonders! To grasp a man's hand while you speak with him may be wise and helpful, for sometimes if you can get one by the hand and show your anxiety by pleading with him, God will bless it. It is well to cast your words, as men drop pebbles into a well, right down into the depth of the soul, quietly, solemnly, when the man is alone. Often is such a means effectual where the preacher with his sermon has labored in vain.

If you cannot win men by words, you must say to yourself, "what can I do?" and go to the Lord with the same enquiry. By the pertinacity of your earnestness you must trouble them into thoughtfulness. As by continual coming the woman wearied the unjust judge, so you do by your continual anxiety and perseverance, weary them in their sins till they will happily give you a little heed in order, if possible, to be rid of you, if for nothing else! If you cannot reach them because they will not read the Bible, yet you can thrust a good book in their way which may say to them what you cannot say. You can write them a letter, short but earnest, and tell them how you feel. You can continue in prayer for them. You can stir up the arm of God and beseech the Most High to come to the rescue.

There have been cases in which, when everything else has failed, a tear, the tear of disappointed love, has done the work. I think it was Mr. Knill who, one day, when distributing tracts among the soldiers, was met by a man who cursed him and said to his fellow soldiers, “Make a ring round him, and I will stop his tract distributing once and for all,” and then he uttered such fearful oaths and curses that Mr. Knill, who could not escape, burst into a flood of tears. Years afterwards, when he was preaching in the streets, a member of the British Grenadier Guards came up, and said, “Mr. Knill, do you know me?” “No, I do not,” he said, “I don’t know that I ever saw you.”

“Do you remember the soldier who said, ‘Make a ring round him and stop his tract distributing,’ and do you remember what you did?” “No, I do not.” “Why, you broke into tears and when I got home those tears melted my heart, for I saw you were so in earnest that I felt ashamed of myself. And now I preach, myself, that same Jesus whom once I despised.” Oh that you might have such a strong love for perishing sinners that you will put up with their rebuffs and rebukes, and say to them, “Strike me if you will, but hear me! Ridicule me, but still I will plead with you! Cast me under your feet as though I were the offscouring of all things, but at any rate, I will not let you perish if it is in my power to warn you of your danger.”

I thought, as I read my text, that it gave us a striking example of doing all we can. Lot and his wife, and the two daughters–well, that was four–the angels had only four hands, so they did all that they could. There was a hand for each. You notice the text expressly says they took hold of the hand of Lot, and the hand of his wife, and the hand of his two daughters. There were no more persons, and no more helping hands, so that there was just enough instrumentality, but there was not a hand to spare! I wish there were in this Church no idle hands, but that each Believer had both hands occupied in leading souls to Jesus Christ! I do not know what more I can do. I wish I knew. If there were any possibility of getting at some of you, to bring you to Christ, I would not leave a stone unturned!

But I am afraid all our members cannot truthfully say as much as that. Some few can, and I rejoice therein most heartily. I am afraid some of you, although saved yourselves, do but very little for my Lord and Master. And while this great city is perishing, and tens of thousands are going down into the place where our prayers cannot reach them, and where our tears can be of no help, you let them go as though it were of no consequence! You utter no lamentations and make no efforts on their behalf! Let the text rebuke you, my fellow laborers, and God give you Grace to be more earnest in the future.

Observe, also, that as those angels set us an example in using all their power, so they also encourage us to perseverance, for they

ceased not to exhort till they had brought Lot out of danger. We must never pause in our efforts for any man till he is either saved or the funeral bell has tolled for him. Even if the last hour is come and the object of your solicitude is stretched upon the couch which is evidently meant to be his deathbed, still pursue his soul to the very brink of Hell. Up to the very gates of perdition hope should track the rebel. When once that iron gate is shut, it is all over with our efforts, but, meanwhile, until then we may entertain hope for any man! You and I have read nowhere concerning such-and-such a man that God will have no mercy on him! We have scanned the rolls of God's decree and cannot act upon what is not revealed!

We have rejoiced to learn that our own names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and yet we were by nature as vile as any. Then who shall say that any are too vile? The Lord may have made the worst of men the objects of His electing love. We know that some entered the vineyard at the 11 th hour, and why not these? It is a pity that it should havecome to the last hour, but still, until the sun goes down the Master of the vineyard calls laborers into His service. I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, faint not in your holy work!

Every now and then a lethargy creeps over the Christian Church and a degree of weariness steals over our own souls, but let us arise from such a state. We say, "O Lord, how long? How long?" We think we shall see but little good result of our labor, and we are

ready to cast away our confidence and cease from perseverance. Up, Brethren, up! The devil wearies not! The powers of darkness rest not day nor night! The temptations of this city never know a pause! The dens of infamy and the halls of vice are always enclosing their prey! The lion is lurking everywhere–how, then, dare we be idle? Oh you that know the power of the inner life and have tasted that the Lord is gracious, stand fast in what you have received and press onward towards more exalted holiness. "Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

I will say no more to these messengers of God except this, that we ought to remember that we are the messengers of God's mercy to the sons of men. The text tells us, "The Lord being merciful unto him." The angels had not come to Lot of themselves–they were the embodiment and outward display of God's mercy. Christians in the world should view themselves as manifestations of God's mercy to sinners, instruments of Divine Grace, servants of the Holy Spirit. Now mercy is a nimble attribute. Justice lingers, it is shod with lead, but the feet of mercy are winged. Mercy delights to perform its office. So should it be with us a delight to do good to men.

God can save men without instruments, but He very seldom does it. His usual rule is to work by means. Oh that the mercy of God would work mightily by us! Let us remember, as we mingle with society, that God has committed to us the ministry of

reconciliation. If angels were sent upon this ministry, surely they would be incessantly active! They would fly with all their might from place to place to do the Lord's will! Shall we who are honored in this be less active than they? As much as lies in us, let us redeem the time because the days are evil. Let us be instant in season and out of season, let us sow beside all waters, and let it be our earnest endeavor to make full proof of our service, whatever that service may be, that at last it may be said, "Well done, you good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things."

I cannot speak with you as I would, but I feel in my own heart a most solemn earnestness to have all the members of this Church engaged in soul-saving work. Beloved, we shall never rebut the attacks of Popery, nor stop the advance of Puseyism, nor answer the quibbles of infidelity except by the personal holiness and individual consecration of our Church members. In the days immediately before the Reformation, and at the time of the Reformation, God's Gospel grew mightily and prevailed because the believers in the Gospel were noticed among their neighbors for the holiness of their lives–they were the most harmless, upright, and generous of men, so that when they were persecuted, their simple neighbors said to one another–"The priests let the lascivious and the debauched escape, but the good, and the honest, and the holy are taken to the stake, or cast into prison."

That was an argument against Popery, of which men's minds perceived the power! And, moreover, it was because every converted person sought to bring in others that the Gospel spread. It was thus in the first Apostolic fervor. Every man was a missionary, every woman was an evangelist, and so the kingdom in the power of the Holy Spirit could not but grow! I want you to conquer this city of London! I want you to subdue this United Kingdom! I labor in prayer to God that this Church may be the little handful of corn, the fruit of which shall shake like Lebanon! Not this Church alone, but all others, too–but as I have specially to deal with you, I want you to be distinguished for your zeal and perseverance in the cause of Christ.

It seems to me that if you were what you should be, there is no reason why this dead mass of London should not be made to heave with the power of vital godliness. Little knots of you might form Churches in the localities in which you are living. These would soon increase in membership and be new centers of usefulness. Some are called to emigrate. We have always considerable streams going from us–some into the country towns of England, some to Australia and New Zealand and others to the United States–if we were all full of holiness, how might we be like fire brands to set the world on a blaze with the sacred flame of love to Jesus our Lord!

I must now leave my Brethren to address myself to the lingering ones of whom there is a goodly number now present, lingering at

the gates of Sodom, unsaved and in danger of destruction.

II. TO YOU, O LINGERERS, I NOW SPEAK, hoping to be the means, by God's Grace, of driving you out of this lingering. I shall begin–O you that are halting between two opinions–by asking you, Why do you linger? Lot, I think, loitered because he had much property in and around the city. Probably his flocks and herds were all pastured in the well-watered plain of Sodom. Do you linger because you will lose your gains–because your trade, being an evil one, must be renounced–or because, by following the laws of Christ, you will become a loser in your transactions? My Friend, whatever you lose, lose not your soul! "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has, will he give for his life," and the day will come when you will look upon your gold and silver and all your estate as worthless in comparison with your soul! Be not foolish, and let not fleeting gain, so soon to disappear, cause you to throw away eternal gain.

Perhaps Lot's wife lingered out of natural affection because she had daughters, and perhaps sons, who were determined not to leave the city. It seems to me very likely that Lot had other daughters beside the two who fled with him, for we are told in the early part of the chapter that those daughters who were with him in the house were not married, and yet this chapter speaks of sons-in-law. Though this is not certain, yet it is most probable that there were other daughters married to the sons-in-law who mocked. Certainly those mentioned who escaped were not married at the time. Did

Lot's wife look back because of these daughters whom she could not bear to leave, or was she doting upon those jovial women who had often come gossiping to her house, and at whose house she had been entertained with vicious company?

My Hearers, is that your case? You would rather lose all earthly friends than lose the best of friends! You would rather be cast out of the circle of society than be cast out of the circle of the glorified spirits! You will find no woman, however enchanting, and no man upon earth, however admirable, to be at all worth the losing of your soul in order to the winning of their company and their esteem. Cut the bond if it binds you to ruin! Out with the knife and cut off that right arm, or pluck out that right eye sooner than perish in Hell fire!

As to Lot's daughters, I know not why they lingered, but, perhaps there were some very dear to them in the city. Some of you young people may have companions who are ungodly, and you are afraid to come away from them. Perhaps the dread of their laugh terrifies you. Oh, but it were better to be laughed at and go to Heaven than to be applauded and cast into the pit! You may be laughed into Hell, but you cannot be laughed out of it again. You may cast away your soul to escape ridicule, but by no possibility shall ridicule ever give you back the priceless treasure you have lost. I do beseech you, as men who would be wise, and as men who can judge, consider what there can be in this world that can recompense you

for the loss of the Divine favor, and for being cast away forever and forever from all hope and joy!

Why do you linger? If it is for love of sinful company, you linger like madmen! Oh that your madness may be cured in time! Do you reply that you do not believe in the danger? Then I am, indeed, sorry for you, for the danger is none the less sure. When men die, they do not die like dogs–they live hereafter. There is a resurrection and a judgment. There is a day appointed in which God will judge the world by the Man, Christ Jesus, who will sit upon the Great White Throne to divide the nations, as the shepherd divided the sheep from the goats. Your doubting it will not make your doom less certain or less severe–believe it!

God has revealed it, your conscience justifies it! The most hardened unbelievers have, in the hour of death, as a general rule, given their assent to it, and so, I doubt not, will you! Tremble, you that forget God, for His own words are, “The wicked shall be cast into Hell, with all the nations that forget God.” Do you linger because you doubt the way of escape? I hope it is not because you do not understand it! If you have attended this House of Prayer I am certain that you do understand it as far as the letter of it, if the Gospel can be understood, for I have put it into the most plain words a hundred times, that, “Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved.” That is, whoever trusts in what Christ is, and what Christ has done, shall not perish but have everlasting life!

Do you mistrust this way of escape? Oh that you would have faith in it, for some of us have tried it! Thousands now on earth, and tens of thousands in the skies have rested upon Christ alone for their salvation and they have rejoiced in life and in death in finding that there was no condemnation to them! Do not doubt it–it is your only hope!

Or perhaps you think that you do not need it. But it is a foolish thought. However excellent you may have been, you must be saved on the same footing as the very worst. This Book contains only one Gospel. It declares that there is only one door to Heaven. We are told over and over again, that, "no other foundation can man lay than that is laid." Soul, the Lord Jesus is your only hope! If you do not accept Him, there awaits you nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation! Reject Christ and you reject your soul's only hope! You cast yourself away! You willfully destroy yourself when you reject the Gospel of God's dear Son.

It is possible that the reason why you linger is that you indulge some favorite sin. I shall not attempt to guess at what it is. Perhaps it is a secret but shameful lust. You cannot indulge known sin and yet enter Heaven. Well Soul, God says to you this morning, "Will you have your sins and go to Hell, or will you give them up and trust in Christ and be saved?" That alternative is put before you. May you have Divine Grace to make the right choice. But your sin must be given up. I am not here to flatter you and tell you that you

can cheat in business, or indulge in lasciviousness, or live in the neglect of the House of God, or be a drunkard and yet enter unto Heaven.

You cannot have eternal life and yet fondle these things in your bosom. You cannot be perfect, but you must be willing to be so, and anxious to be so. No sin nurtured in the heart can be compatible within salvation–you must wish to sweep them all away in the Holy Spirit's strength. You must do it, too, as God shall help you, or else if you cling to sin, you cling to destruction. Oh, but what sins can be so sweet as to be worth giving up the harps of angels, and worth the endurance of–

"The flames which no abatement know,

Though briny tears forever flow"?

Perhaps, I have not touched the right reason for your lingering. You, perhaps, are subject to an idleness of spirit, a natural inaction and lethargy. I think in most cases this is the root of the matter. You are not bestirred about soul affairs–you are too idle to come to decision. But, Sirs, you must come to it or die! This stupefying and drugging your conscience, and these excuses and procrastination's will not do–you must come to a decision one way or the other, sooner or later–so why not now? Why, men, you are active enough in business! Are you not pushing your trade and moving Heaven and earth, and rightly enough, to pick up a living for yourselves

and your families? And are your souls of such small account and esteem that you can afford to play over them and trifle?

Oh, Sirs, have you lost your wits? Has your reason gone out to grass that you think your immortal and eternal interests to be of so little value that you can sleep over the mouth of Hell? Shake yourselves, I pray you, lest you be shaken by the rough hand of death and lift up your eyes, as the Savior said the rich man did, "in Hell being in torment." Lift up those sluggard eyes now! If ever you were in earnest in your studies or about your business, be in earnest now, I beseech you, about your souls! Prove that you are not fools, but that you have some wits and reason left. I fear that in some cases–though I know not of many in this place–I fear that this whole matter is despised.

I often wonder over some of you. You acknowledge the Truth of the Bible. You acknowledge all that is revealed there, and yet you do not repent! I am astonished at you! I can understand the man who says, "I do not believe it." His remaining unconverted, though a dreadful thing, is a consistent thing. There is this to be said for him–he does not absolutely make himself out to be a fool. But you who say you believe in the Bible and admit that there is a Hell? You who believe that there is salvation, and that this may be had by trusting in Christ and yet do not trust Him–what shall I say to you–what shall I say of you?

I will say this–I would sooner you give up all pretense than waver and halt, and parley with the Truth of God to the quenching of the Spirit and the hardening of your consciences! I am half inclined to say with stern Elijah, "If the Lord is God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him." If religion is a lie, do not pretend to believe it! Say so and be honest–and take the consequences. But, if it is true, act upon it. If there is a Hell, fly from it! If there is a Heaven, obtain it! If there is a City of Refuge, reach it! If there is a Christ, believe in Him! If He is an impostor, come not here, but reject Him utterly! But, if He is the Savior of sinners, bow down before Him now, I beseech you, lest this be the withering accusation at the last–that you were inconsistent even on your own admissions and that you went to Hell–not simply as sinners, but as fools going willingly to the gallows, knowing where they were going and yet walking on as bullocks to the slaughter! Well, I have put the question, Why do you linger?

Now I want to say two or three words to you, and they shall be to this effect–With what shall we hasten you? These few considerations, hurriedly offered, I hope will not be forgotten. Time is short. Young people do not believe this, but you who have reached 30 or 40 know it. You know how the weeks spin round, how the years fly like wheels that whiz in their hot haste. You know this and feel it, and yet you let these years run on and on. Why do you linger when time flies faster than a thunderbolt and lingers not?

Moreover, life is uncertain. Some of you know this by painful experience. You have recently lost friends. Sound and in strong health, they have been struck down. Others of you have been accustomed to attend the deathbed, or you often see the hearse go by the windows. Or you are sick and you carry death in your heart. Why do you linger? I feel as if I must stop awhile and weep over your insanity! O Friends, if you knew when you were to die, it would be but wise to lay hold on Christ now! But, since you do not know but what in this very house you may become corpses, will you run the risks of Hell and eternal wrath? I pray you do not do so for your own sake, for it is your business more than mine. For your own sakes be wise and linger no longer!

If this will not quicken you, let me tell you that if you were now to believe in Christ you would be no loser. Present salvation would be present happiness. Trusting in Christ at this moment would give you–I speak from experience–a joy which nothing in the world can rival! Beside that, you are now, at this moment, in danger. Have you never read such texts as these, “He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God”? “There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked”? “God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, He will whet His sword; He has bent His bow, and made it ready”?

Do not think I speak these terrible things because I like to speak them. No, but because I would have you saved! I cannot bear to think of your being lost, though you can! I cannot bear to think that I should have looked into the faces of some of you so many months, and even years, and yet should have to appear a swift witness against you in the day of judgment! Shall I not be compelled to say, "These people did know the Gospel, and did in a measure feel its power, but they said, 'Not now, not now. When I have a more convenient season, I will send for you.' " And it is so simple! It is but to believe and live, to trust and to be saved. O that now Christ would cast the weight of His love into the scale that you might once and for all give up yourself for Him!

There is one terrible reflection which I cannot help mentioning, namely, that with some of you it ought to be an alarming fact that the means of Grace are losing effect. You used to feel them much more than you do now. Why, when you first came to the Surrey Music Hall, or to the Tabernacle, if the preacher seemed at all in earnest, you wept! Sometimes you could not sleep at night because of the alarm that was caused you! But I may ring the alarm bell now, again and again before it will awaken you! To you my voice has lost its striking note. You are used to the sound of my entreaties. Oh that I could awaken you! May I sleep in the grave before I become a mere machine to lull you into slumber!

I do strive to get variety in my ministry because I know that without it I cannot get your attention and reach your hearts. Ah, thoughtless Hearer, you had better go somewhere else! There may be a chance of somebody else getting at your heart, but I am afraid I shall not. If you do not repent under my ministry, go somewhere else! Do not lose the chance that perhaps there may be somebody else who will be more plain and more earnest with you than I am–and do not let it be the sad case that you shall sit here till you shall nod yourselves unto destruction, slumbering under the sound of the Gospel and then sinking into perdition, hopelessly and without excuse.

This is the last reflection I shall offer you. Within a few short months, or say within a few short years at the very outside, you will know one of two things–you will know either the terrors of Hell or the glories of Heaven. Now, which shall it be? All this hinges upon your believing or not believing in the Lord Jesus. If you believe, your portion shall be with the white-robed throng whose life is bliss, whose existence is immortality! If you believe, all the splendors of Heaven shall be yours with Christ in whom you have trusted.

But if you believe not, as truly as God is God, and that this Book is true–and if you deny God and this Book, then I must deal with you another time–if these things are not a fable, then you, even you, a child of a godly mother–even you, a hearer at the

Tabernacle–you must be bound up with bundles of sinners to be burned! You must hear the voice, “Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels.” And in that day, in that day, do me at least this one act of justice–acknowledge that I did warn you of it, that I did seek to stop you if I could–even to laying violent hands upon you, if possible, to turn you from your evil ways!

But oh, it must not be so! I cannot bear it! I cannot close without having said to you what God Himself has said, “Turn you, turn you; why will you die, O house of Israel.” “Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Come unto Christ, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and He will give you rest. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Ge 19:17 • Escape for Thy Life!

SERMON 2400

N*umber 2400—Or, "Escape For Your Life!"*

"Escape for your life."

Genesis 19:17

THE Lord Himself said to Lot, "Escape for your life," although the command was sent by one of His chosen messengers. God has messengers, nowadays, and He still sends by them short, sharp, urgent, stimulating messages like this, "Escape for your life." This message was sent in love. God loved Lot and, therefore, He would save him from the impending doom of Sodom. I doubt not that this message of love was spoken by the messenger in very solemn tones. I do not know how angels speak, but I am certain that the very heart of the messenger was apparent in the message when he

said to Lot, “Escape for your life.” Whether he whispered it in Lot’s ears, or uttered it in a loud voice, I cannot tell, but anyway, I am sure that it was delivered as it ought to be delivered and it had an immediate effect upon the man who heard it, for he was obedient to it.

Now, it may be that God has designs of love towards you who are here, who, as yet, have never fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you. Remember that the Gospel admonition comes to you fresh from God–it has been in this blessed Book for ages–but it has not grown stale! It still leaps from the mouth of God, filled with all its native energy, and though I who have to deliver it to you may not speak it as I would desire, for I am very feeble, I will at least speak it out of the very depths of my soul while I try to plead with every unconverted man or woman whom my message may reach–and this shall be the one burden of my pleading–“Escape for your life.”

Notice, first, that THERE WAS NO SAFETY FOR LOT WHERE HE WAS.

He must escape from the doomed city. The angel did not propose to him that he should stop in Sodom and, beneath some sheltering arch, hide himself from the fire-shower. No, the message was, “Escape! Flee from Sodom! Escape for your life.” So, to you who are unconverted, we can bring no proposals of hope if you stay where you are! We can hold out no hope to you either in this world

or in that which is to come! Neither a lesser nor a “larger hope” do we believe in, apart from your laying hold on eternal life by faith in Jesus Christ! Stay where you are and you are doomed. Remain what you are and you must perish in the overthrow of that City of Destruction which God will certainly burn up before long!

There was no safety for Lot where he was, so, let me say to you who are unbelieving and unconverted, there is no safety for you in unforgiven sin. It does not matter what form your sin has taken–whether you have been a profligate or a moralist–as long as the sin you have committed is unforgiven, there is no safety, for whether your sins are as scarlet, or, in your judgment, of a milder hue, does not affect the truth of what I say–you must be washed in the precious blood of Christ and pardoned through His great atoning Sacrifice received by faith, or else you will die in your sins and you will be driven to the place where hope can never enter! If you die with your sins upon you–where death leaves you–eternity will find you! Once lost, you will be lost forever. So, there is no safety in unforgiven sin.

And, further, there is no safety in unforsaken sin. No, you must escape for your life from every sin. The drunk cannot be saved and keep to his cups. The adulterer cannot be saved and indulge his evil passions. The thief cannot be saved and remain dishonest. The only salvation for you is salvation from your sins–and that is the salvation that we preach! How many would like to be saved from

the punishment due to sin, and yet to be allowed to go on in the sin! But there is nothing of that kind of teaching in the Scripture! God did not send His Son to be the Excuser or the Minister of sin, but to be the Savior from sin! There is no hope for you if you stay in this Sodom–you must get out of it–you must clear right away from it.

Perhaps you say, "I will change my place of residence. I will go from the slums of the evil city into the cleaner and more respectable part of it." I tell you that you have to come right out of it! You must altogether quit the region of sin. You must flee from the realms of iniquity or else you shall be consumed in the destruction of the city. Up and away from all sin! Up and away! Our cry is not, "Hide in a corner," or, "Shift into a better place," but, "Escape for your life!"

Again, there is no safety in unbelief. You may say, "I do not believe this," but, as the Lord lives, before whom I stand, it is true! In my own heart, soul and conscience, I know that there is a Judge of all the earth, and that He must do right, and that the day shall come when He will execute vengeance upon those who live and die in sin, for He cannot wink at iniquity. It is not in the Nature of a holy God to suffer sin to go unpunished! You may shut your eyes to this Truth of God, but it is there. You may disbelieve it, but it is there. You may ridicule it, but it is there, and you shall, before long, know it to be so! You must come out of this state of unbelief if you are to be saved! There is no salvation in unbelief. "He that believes

and is baptized shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned." There is to be no flinching in this matter–I am not sent here to please you who do not believe, or to talk with bated breath, as though I sympathized with your unbelief. I denounce it as high treason against the majesty of God and, therefore, I cry unto you, "Repent and believe the Gospel," for if you will not, you must perish in your unbelief! "If you believe not," says Christ, "that I am He, you shall die in your sins." There is no safety in unbelief and, therefore, we say, as the angel said to Lot, "Escape for your life."

And once more, let me remind you that there is no safety in self-righteousness. If anybody here says, "Thank God, I am no doubter, I am no profligate, I am no open sinner," I am glad if you can truthfully say that, but still remember, if you trust in your own righteousness, you cannot be saved! You must come out of that condemned city or else you are a lost man. I spoke with one, this morning, who is, I believe, earnestly seeking salvation, and he said to me, "I have denied myself this, and I have cast away that." I was pleased to hear it, but I said to him, "You have denied these things to yourself, but have you denied yourself? That is to say, have you left off trusting in yourself?" The hardest self-denial is to deny yourself and get right away from all confidence in your own doings, feelings and everything that comes of yourself, for you might as well hope to be saved by your sins as by your good works! The road to Hell by human merit is as certain as the road

there by human sin! If you seek to insult the Atonement of Christ by setting up your merit as though it were as good as that Atonement, or by trying to prove that you do not need that Atonement, you are just barring Heaven's gate against yourself! You must come out of that self-righteousness if you would be saved! My only cry to you is, "Escape, escape, escape for your life, for there is no safety for you where you are!"

II. But now, in the next place, according to this message of the angel, IF LOT IS TO BE SAVED, HE MUST RUN FOR IT AT ALL COSTS–"Escape for your life."

First, he must leave his former comrades. Have you any jolly companions who are not Christians? "They are bright, lively fellows," you say. But they are doing you infinite mischief–they are leading you away from God and His Christ! Break loose from them–"Escape for your life." Though they seek to hold you back, tear yourself away from them and even leave your garment in their hands, as Joseph left his in the hands of Potiphar's wife! "Escape for your life." Quit all evil company.

Next, Lot had to leave his former comforts. For the sake of comfort, he had gone to Sodom and, doubtless, he had his house well furnished there. But he must quit it all. Probably it was that excellent house that made Lot's wife look back–she could hardly relinquish all those nice things of theirs even for life, itself! Beware, when you are seeking Christ, that you do not let your

money or your business stand in your way! It will be better for you to enter Heaven a beggar than being a rich man, to be cast into Hell! It were better for you to be as houseless as the most unpitied waif about whom the wintry winds are howling–it were better for you to die in a ditch and to be saved–than that you should live in a palace and yet, after all, be cast into Hell fire! I charge you, be ready to give up all things, if necessary, sooner than lose your soul. "Escape, escape, escape for your life!"

Yet again, Lot must not stop to argue–and nor must you. You do not see the danger. You need more evidence. You have objections–to all of which my one solitary answer is–"Escape, escape, escape for your life!" You have not time for me to discuss your difficulties, now. When you are saved, it will be soon enough for us to argue out the moot points, but now, while the fire cloud hovers above your head, escape for your life! Yonder drowning man will not clutch the rope until I have explained to him the doctrine of specific gravity. O Fool, what have you to do with specific gravity when you are drowning? Lay hold of the rope and live! So, there are some who must have election or predestination explained to them, or the doctrine of the human will–they must have this, that, and the other opened up to them and made clear as daylight. I beseech you, do not be such madmen! Do not trifle with your souls, but escape for your life! That is the one business of the present

hour–see to that, first, and let other matters wait awhile till you are in a fit condition to consider them.

If Lot is to be rescued, he must, as men say, put his best foot forward. It is quite early in the morning, but before the sun has risen much higher, all Sodom and Gomorrah will be destroyed. You have already waited far too long, my unsaved Friend! Gray hairs are on you head here and there–why will you delay any longer? Did you not catch the solemn tones of our hymn–

"Hasten, sinner, to be wise,

Stay not for the morrow's sun"?

We sang that line over and over again in the different verses–

"Stay not for the morrow's sun."

Oh, that God would, in great mercy, press that appeal home upon you! "Escape for your life."

Lot must not sit down and take things easy–nor must you. Lot must not begin to crawl at a snail's pace and amuse himself by looking down every side street of Sodom as he leaves it–he must run from the doomed city and you, also, by God's Grace, must bestir yourself! You must quit your sin by repentance and lay hold of Christ by faith. God help you to do so! Oh, that my lips could speak the longing language of my heart, and cease to utter the feeble syllables that do not express half what I feel! How can words fully express the burning desires of a soul yearning over sinners? But if you become willing to be led, even by my feeble

speech, to listen to God's almighty voice as He says to you, through me, His messenger–"Escape for your life."

I cannot help, just by way of parenthesis, pointing out to you the contrast between the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the repentance of the Ninevites. At the command of God, Jonah went though Nineveh and this was all he had to say, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Again, and again, and again, in bitter tones, the Prophet cried, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown"–and the whole body of the Ninevites sought for mercy and found it–with nothing to help them to pray but this, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" Now, if you have nothing better to comfort you than this, "Who can tell?"–

"'Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer,'"

why, you have good ground to go upon in approaching your God! But, Friends, you are not under such a dispensation as were the Ninevites–I have not to cry to you, "Yet forty days, and you shall be destroyed." I have to tell you that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that whoever believes in Him has everlasting life! I have to entreat and beseech you to lay hold on eternal life by believing in the Lord Jesus. Oh, how you ought to welcome such a message as that!

If there is anybody whom I am addressing who is actually marked for death and who knows that he carries about in his body that which must, in a very short time, bring him to the grave. One who is well aware that he cannot recover from the incurable disease that has seized him–yet, even that should not hinder him from seeking God's face–rather it should move him at once to turn to Jesus! I can see a man before me now–my mind's eye can see him and I know that he must die, I am sure of it. Poor wretch, he has been a thief! His hands and both his feet are nailed up, they are bleeding from the cruel nails and, within a short time, he must die in agony. Yet I hear him cry out, as he turns his eyes on the crucified Jesus Christ, "Lord, remember me!" He is nearly dead and almost in Hell, but he cries, "Lord, remember me," and he is saved–and today is with Christ in Paradise!

Now, you who have a cancer, you who are sick and ill, you who are poor and broken down and feel as if you must soon die, you who are as great a sinner as the dying thief was, say to Jesus, "Lord, remember me," and He will remember you! There is no reason under the earth, nor on the earth, nor in Heaven, itself–there is no supposable reason why you should not pray! And if you pray and seek the Lord's face, you shall not come to Him in vain, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." God help you to come, now, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake!

III. Now, to conclude, let me remind you that LOT HAD EVERYTHING AT STAKE and, therefore, the angel said

Suppose he had stayed in Sodom–then he would have lost all. He would not have saved his furniture, or his gold, or his silver–he would have lost all that he had. Suppose you stop your sin–will you really save anything by it? "I shall save myself from thought," says one. Oh, but do you think you are an ox, or a donkey, that thought should be trouble to you? Why, it surely will be your wisdom to addict yourself to the most sedulous care about your eternal interests! Suppose there should be a cry of, "Fire!" raised in this house, tonight, as there was but a little while ago in Spitalfields–how many there are who would rush to the doors in a mad panic to escape for their lives! Yet, surely, the soul's life, the eternal life, is more precious than the life of the body! Will you not make that the first point to be considered and settled–for, if you could by sin gain the whole world–yet what would it profit you when you would lose your own soul?

Again, if Lot had not fled out of Sodom, he would, himself, have perished. Not merely would his garments have been burnt, but he would have perished. Not only would his gold and his silver have melted in the fire, but he would have perished. That was a true saying, though Satan uttered it, "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." And all that a man has he ought to give for his soul, for the immortal part of his being, for his higher

and better nature! Why, if your soul is cast into Hell, it would have been better for you that you had never been born! If you neglect the Great Salvation and you die and perish in your iniquity, you have lost everything! You are not merely like a bankrupt who has lost his gold, but you have lost yourself! I beseech you, therefore, listen to me as I cry to you, in my Master's name, "'Escape for your life,' your immortal life, which is now in imminent danger!" Your existence will continue whether you are lost or saved, but your life! Have you yet received eternal life at the hands of God? Your life! Will you be content to lose it and to perish in your sin?

The worst point about this story is that if Lot had not escaped, he would have perished with the men of Sodom. He could not endure them–he was vexed with their filthy conversation! How horrible, then, would it have been for him to perish with them! I cannot bear to think that some of you upright, moral people may yet be lost! You were never drunks, and yet you will perish with the drunk unless you repent and trust in Jesus! You were never swearers, but you will be as surely damned as the blasphemers will be unless you come to Christ! You cannot bear impurity or filthy language–there is much about you that is most amiable and excellent–but even to you, the Savior says, "You must be born again." And if you are not born again, if you have no faith in Christ, if you are not converted so as to become as little children, you will as surely perish as will the worst of men!

You sometimes read in the newspaper a horrible story of vice and crime and you wish that it had never been printed, and I wish the same. But what must it be for you to be shut up forever with such as those who commit these unmentionable abominations? Yet there are but two places for man's eternal abode–Heaven and Hell–and if you are not saved so as to go to Heaven, where can you go but into the same pit with all the multitude of transgressors who shall perish in their sins? I wish that you who are outwardly moral and upright would think of this Truth of God. It seems to me as if I ought not to further press it upon you, for you are reasonable beings, you are not shut up in Bedlam. I pray you, therefore, run no longer such fearful risks as you have run up to now, but escape for your lives.

If Lot had been destroyed in the overthrow of Sodom, there would have been one thing about him which there would not have been about the race of the Sodomites, he would have perished after having been warned. When the fire-flakes began to fall and Lot felt the terrible burning, he would have had this barbed dart driven into his heart–"I was told to escape. I was taken outside the city gate. I was led to a place of vantage and charged to escape for my life. Nobody else had that opportunity–nobody else in these cities was called, thus, to escape! I had a special appeal made to me by the messenger of God, and I refused it and, therefore, I shall die a self-murderer, having chosen my own delusions." O Sirs, O Sirs, if you go from this Tabernacle to Hell, it shall be hard work for you! If

you perish, I will be clear of your blood. As long as this voice can speak, I will plead with you that you do not destroy yourselves!

Look at the myriads of Africa, and the millions in China and India who have never heard the Gospel! I leave their future in the hands of God, all merciful, but they cannot enter Heaven! Neither can you! But there will be this about your doom, that you had the means of Grace–you had the invitations of mercy, you had the expostulations of God's Word! And you chose–you resolutely chose–to put eternal life far from you! O God, You who have made these men and women, if they have lost their reason, give it back to them and may Your sweet Spirit teach them, now, to judge righteously! And may they at once count it to be inevitable that every wise man should escape for his life and flee from the wrath to come!

I shall not detain you much longer, for surely I have said enough. Only this much must be added before I close. There was a special favor in the case of Lot, for Abraham had prayed for him. I should not wonder if some here present are receiving a warning from me just now because someone else has been praying for them. Abraham had prayed for Sodom and, of course, especially for Lot and, therefore, God's messenger must go to bring Lot out of the doomed city. At this moment, while I am speaking, your mother is praying for you. While I am preaching, your wife is praying for you. Some of you have been made the subjects of special and

particular prayer–you know that it is so! She who is now in Heaven never ceased to pray for you as long as she was here–and her many prayers–shall they not be now answered? They are undying prayers, though she who breathed them has long been dead–they still live in the Presence of God! Has He not sent His messenger, on that account, to bring you out of the City of Destruction? Here! Here! Let me grasp your hand and let us, together, flee from the wrath to come and run to yonder Cross where there is safety, for none ever looked to the Christ that bled thereon and looked in vain! I feel impressed that there are some persons to whom this message is a peculiar answer to very special prayers that have gone up to God on their behalf.

This message will, I trust, come to them as a special warning, as the Lord's messengers reached Lot in a mysterious way. How came those angels in Sodom to tell Lot to escape for his life? How very oddly people are brought where the message of salvation is proclaimed! You did not intend to be in the Tabernacle, tonight, did you? You had an engagement to be somewhere else, but here you are, and you have never been here before! Yesterday you would not even have dreamt of being here tonight–but here you are! To what end are you here? God has, in a mysterious way, brought you here to look in the face of this man who cares for your soul and who says to you in the name of God, "I beseech you, escape for your life!"

Then, again, this message came to Lot at a special time–on the morning in which the city was to be destroyed. An hour later, it would have been too late. I sometimes feel an awful solemnity creeping over me as I stand in this place, because I know many things which I cannot tell you about the strange way in which God speaks here. You remember that just before I went away for my rest, I told you the story of the godless young man who left his father's house? He was going to Australia, followed by his parents' prayers. It was Sunday night–he was about to sail on Wednesday and he thought that he would spend the Sunday evening here in this house, as he knew that it would please his mother. Better, still, it pleased God that night to touch his heart and, we trust, to save his soul!

I put into the "Personal Notes" in The Sword and the Trowel for December, the letter that he wrote home to his parents telling them how God had met with their prodigal boy. That letter reached them only a few hours before a telegram arrived, saying that the vessel had been run into at Graves End and the young man and five others had been drowned! Oh, what a mercy that, just a few hours before he had to meet his God, his God met with him! I may be speaking to some others who are in just the same position, just on the borders of eternity–I cannot tell. You know that it is but two or three Sunday nights ago since one of our Brothers sat over yonder, in the last pew in the middle. He came into the Tabernacle, covered

his face for prayer, and immediately died. We had to delay the service, you remember, while he was quietly carried away.

He was a child of God, but suppose it had been some of you? Suppose it were some of you tonight? What would become of you? God save you even now! Do not run any more risks. There is but a step between you and death, a step between you and Hell if you are unbelievers! Therefore, escape for your lives, and escape tonight–

"Stay not for the morrow's sun."

God help you to have done with delaying and to feel that you must and will run away to the Lord Jesus Christ at once! Put your soul into His hands and if you do, He gives you this guarantee , "None shall pluck you from My hands." Your soul will be safe enough in His keeping! If I take my money to the bank, it is credited to my account. What do I do, then? Do I loaf about and, at last say to the clerk, "Is that money safe?" He would think that my mind was a little wandering!

Sometime ago there was a bank in France to which there came a man who had put in some thousand francs or so, and he said to the banker, "Have you got my thousand francs?" "Yes, certainly. Do you want the money?" "I should like to see it," he said. "Well, here is a thousand francs," and he laid them down before him on the counter. "Thank you," he said, "I do not know that I want to take the cash, now–it is there, alright, so I am satisfied." The next morning, he came in again and he wanted, once more, to see his

money. I believe that the banker cut the connection and told him that he did not need such a customer as that to bank with him. If he could not trust the banker with his money, he had better take it home with him.

Now, if you cannot trust Christ with your souls, go and save yourselves! But if you can trust Christ, put away all those foolish doubts, fears and anxieties, and say–

"Firm as His throne His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What I've committed to His hands
Till the decisive hour!
Then will He own my worthless name
Before His Father's face,
And in the New Jerusalem
Appoint my soul a place."

Finally, the reason why the angel's message had such power with Lot was that God, Himself, was in it. That gave it a special pressure and I have been praying that God, Himself, may be in my message, now–that He may speak, gently speak, and powerfully speak to many of you! You will scarcely know why it is, but you will say, "I never felt like this before. I will arise and go unto my Father. I will repent of my sin. I will look to Jesus, the Crucified Savior, God helping me! But why am I saying this? Why do I feel thus softened,

I who used to be hard as steel? Why am I moved to this surrender of myself to my Savior?”

It will be the sweet Spirit of the blessed God gently working upon your heart and graciously inclining you to yield yourself to the Lord! I pray that it may be so, even now, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

Ge 19:17 • The Ship on Fire — A Voice of Warning

SERMON 0550

T*he Ship On Fire—A Voice Of Warning*

"Escape for your life.

Genesis 19:17

HERE is the alarm of mercy declaring the sinner's duty–"Escape for your life." Here is the work of Grace and the gratitude of the sinner after he is saved–"You have magnified your mercy, which you have showed unto me in saving my life."

The other day there sailed down the Thames as stout a vessel as had ever plowed the deep. The good ship "Amazon," had sailed the broad Pacific many a time and what is there to hinder her from once more reaching America in safety? Who would refuse to underwrite her? Who among her crew or passengers has a fear for

her safety? But in the book of Providence there was a black line against that ship and never more could she reach her desired haven. The wind was exceedingly high–the vessel tarried awhile at Gravesend. There was a little improvement in the weather–she sailed a little further, but cast anchor again and remained off Broadstairs.

Matters went as usual in such weather. Night came on. The watch was changed as usual. The captain turned in, feeling that all was right and safe. The passengers were snug in their berths–a little the worse, perhaps, for the roll of the ship, but as assured of security as men could be. In a moment, what a change had taken place! A passenger perceives a smell of fire. The warning cry is raised. Everyone rushes upon deck. Attempts are made to quench the fire. But when the hatches are lifted up, the wind rushes in and the fire is fanned to a dreadful, all-devouring conflagration. Further effort is of no avail.

Rockets are fired, as the signals of distress. The boats are let down, crowded with the passengers. A lugger puts off to her and a steam-tug hastens to the rescue and, thanks be unto the God of Providence, all the passengers–the captain and chief officers last–are on board the vessels and carried to Margate where they see the melancholy, and yet satisfactory spectacle of their vessel burning to the water's edge and then disappearing from view.

Now, as the good Brother who was captain to that vessel constantly comes here when he is on shore and as he is sitting in the midst of you tonight, I thought I might use the burning of this vessel as a picture of spiritual things, out of which I might make an illustrated sermon These things happen not without design and should not escape without improvement. Two things, then, tonight– they are both in the text and in the story of the ship on fire. First, an alarm–"Escape for your life." Secondly, grateful acknowledgment–"You have magnified your mercy, which you have showed unto me in saving my life."

First, AN ALARM. We come here tonight to raise an alarm. True ministers of God are great alarmists. It is their duty to be like Barnabas who was a son of consolation. But it is equally their duty to be like Boanerges–sons of thunder. Thunder does not rock men to sleep and plays no pleasant tune for fools to dance to. With its crash and roar it wakes a slumbering world, and its dread volleys, echoed peal on peal, afford no dulcet notes for dainty ears. God's servants should learn to thunder–for when God speaks through them, the voice of the Lord is powerful and full of majesty. And in His temple does everyone speak of His Glory.

The alarm we have to give tonight is that of the angel to Lot, with an emphasis of meaning–"Escape for your life." It is an alarm suggested by tremendous danger. When the cry of, "Fire! Fire! Fire!" ran along the decks, and the cabins and the saloons of the

“Amazon,” everyone knew that there was no small danger to be encountered, for flame is a cruel tyrant and devours remorselessly. The very word, “Fire!” has a razor edge about it, cutting to the very quick. Terror has fire for her first-born.

But the alarm we have to raise is concerning a matter more terrific, still–add to the word “Fire,” that dreadful syllable, “Hell”–and then what shall more alarm than “Hell fire”? In that cry we comprehend such weighty matters as eternity alone can reveal. The wrath to come! The judgment of the eternal! The wrath of the Most High! Fire, when it is at its most furious pitch, is but a plaything compared with Hell fire! Yes, when it consumes a city, when it runs down the red lips of a volcano and buries thousands–when it sets the sky and earth upon a blaze as in Egypt’s plagues–it is but child’s play compared with the wrath of God and that Tophet which is prepared of old, the pile whereof is wood and much smoke!

Here is something at which the joints of a man’s loins may well be loosed for there is eternity in it, infinity in it, Deity in it! And where these three are set against a man, woe unto him! It is as when the fire is set in battle array against the stubble. Well may it be written by the Prophet, “The sinners in Zion are afraid. Fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burning?” Sinner, by the crushing terror of the woe which comes, I beseech you, “Escape for your life!”

It is a danger not to be overcome. The fire engine was brought out upon the deck of the burning ship. Attempts were made to extinguish the fire. But the mischief was far too much in power to be driven from its stronghold. The like may be boldly declared of the evil which comes upon the ungodly. Sinner, your danger is such that you cannot contend with it by any power of your own. There is a fire of sin within you which you cannot quench. There is a fire of Hell without you which no drops, even of your own blood, shall be able to extinguish.

You are in a danger which you are unable to cope with. There is no possibility that if you remain in it, your utmost exertions or most strenuous efforts can avert the certain ruin which your state must bring upon you. If you neglect the only way of salvation, how can you escape? What awaits you but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation? The pillars of Heaven tremble and are astonished at the reproof of the Lord of Hosts–how, then, can you endure the tempest of His anger and the fury of His hot displeasure?–

"O Sinner, seek His face,
Whose wrath you can not bear;
Fly to the dying Savior's wounds,
And find salvation there."

It is a danger, too, a terrific danger which makes no exception to anyone. The captain is as much in danger as the poorest cabin boy

if he cannot escape from the burning ship. The rich man, with ingots of gold in his cabin, will as certainly be burned alive as the poor traveler who could scarcely pay his passage. There is no distinction of persons in the judgments of God. Sinner, you may be great and mighty, but you shall go down to Hell unless Grace shall save you! Woman, you may be amiable in your temper and excellent in your deportment, but you shall perish as surely as a harlot, unless Christ has pity upon you. Man, you may be upright, and shine before your fellow merchants as one of excellent repute, but the wrath of God abides on you except you flee to Jesus–for there is none other name given under Heaven whereby you must be saved. And out of that name and apart from that name, whoever you may be, though you were monarch of seven empires, you are still in danger! Rich and poor, high and low, learned and ignorant–my cry is to you all, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord!"

Do not forget that we are in danger of a consuming fire–a danger which kills without remedy. It is not a fire which merely singes and scorches, but a fire which burns to ashes. As yonder ship must be burned up and every passenger who cannot leave its burning deck must be consumed, so you, O unconverted Men and Women, are in danger of utter destruction from the Presence of the Lord. "For, behold, the day comes that shall burn as an oven. And all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that

comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

I wish I could speak upon this dreadful subject in a proper manner. Whitfield had tones and emotions which were fitting for such a subject. He would cry out, "Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come! The wrath to come!" He would cry, I say, until all his hearers responded with, "What must we do to be saved?" And good Baxter, trembling, lest he should be guilty of men's blood, while he delivered the message as a dying man to dying men–knew the terrors of the half so much need of earnestness as when I see you in the midst of a mass of sin and corruption which must be consumed by God's anger and you with it!

Sinner, why will you die? What can ail you? What besots you that you do not perceive anything dreadful in the wrath of Him who made you? He can dash whole worlds to pieces–what can He not do with you? Have you learned to be callous when you hear of eternity? Have your ears grown cold to that dreadful word, "Condemnation"? Can you read the story of those to whom He said, "Depart, you cursed," and not tremble? Can you know that you are this day in danger of the Judgment and not be afraid? When the sword is sharp, and furbished and taken out of its sheath, can you laugh about its edge? Can you yet make mirth? Then is there, indeed, need for me to cry to you and for all God's faithful

ministers to cry with louder voices than mine–“Escape! Escape! Escape for your life!”

The alarm of fire was needed because of the security of the persons in danger. Many on board the “Amazon” were sound asleep. Oh, how dreadful to be awakened out of sleep with the cry of, “Fire! Fire! Fire! Some of them, when they awoke, seemed to have been so startled and so confused that they had fairly to be dragged out of their berths so that they might he rescued. There were none there, we have reason to believe, who would have been kept below through their own drunkenness or the carelessness of the crew.

They were in a right state, with this exception, of course, that they were all alarmed–and men alarmed are not always ready to do the wisest thing. And as for the captain and his men they seemed to have been as sensible as they were brave. My Hearers, God’s ministers have to deal with passengers much more difficult to handle. Are not men asleep? Till the voice of God awakens us, we are all asleep. How you and I walked for years and years and years upon the brink of the grave, as utterly unconcerned as though we were to live forever! And when sometimes we were a little impressed by the passing bell, or an open grave, or an earnest sermon, how soon we went back again to our old frivolity and toyed with the flames of Hell as though they were fancy’s dream!

It is not so now. God has awakened us. But we had never been awakened if the voice which awakes the dead had not cried in our ear, “Escape for your life.” No, worse–men are not only asleep, but when they do perceive their danger, they love their sins too well to leave them–even though Hell stares them in the face. The best of them cry with Solomon’s sluggard, “Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep.” Sinner, how hard it is to bring you to serious consideration of your ways! We cannot touch your wits, or make you reason like a man of sound mind. You will sooner be damned by thoughtlessness than give an hour’s careful meditation to your soul’s affairs.

We would gladly drag you out of your sleeping berth and even kick you and strike you, treating you to rough usage, if we could by this means drag you from the devouring flames! You would thank us well enough afterwards for these rough cuffs if we could but wake you. We hear complaints that the minister speaks too harshly and talks too much of judgment. Saved sinners never make that complaint! They know that nothing but these terrors will awaken some slumbering minds. And if they are awakened themselves, they are but too glad, however rough the means may have been.

Are there not some in this house tonight who are hard, fearfully hard, to be brought to sober thinking because they are drunken and besotted with sin? Some of you, with your Sunday trading will rather gain your sixpences and your paltry pence on the Sunday,

than find eternal felicity in faith in the Lord Jesus. Others of you with your tap-room companions, with your theatres, your balls and worse places, still–where lust wears no mask–are cutting the throats of your poor miserable souls. You cannot give up your vices–you will sooner be damned than be Christians.

Well, so it must be, Sirs, if you will have these things and will pawn your souls for them, so it must be. You have chosen your own delusions and you shall inherit them. But O, do listen once more while we warn you in God's name, "Escape for your life!" Trifle no more with Hell and Heaven, with your own soul and judgment, with God and His dear bleeding Son! If every preacher in London should suddenly begin to preach nothing but alarms, it would all be needed, for what a secure and reckless city this is. If every corner in the street had a Jonah in it and that Jonah's sermon were nothing but this–"Yet a few more days and you shall be destroyed," it were not too much for a city so given to slumber.

We have waxen rich! We have grown careless till we have become like Nineveh of old, a people at ease and dwelling carelessly! Isaiah might well say concerning London–"You said I shall be a lady forever: so that you did not lay these things to your heart, neither did remember the latter end of it." Let us take heed unto ourselves lest in the world to come this carnal security of ours should be like fuel to the fire and the remembrance of our sloth should pour oil upon the flames. O God, let the alarm be heard

tonight by those who crowd this House, for You know that many of them are sound asleep.

Again, it is an alarm which requires instant attention. A man on board a vessel, when he hears the cry of, “Fire!” must not stop to arrange his clothes. He must not be concerned to see that his face is washed, that he has bound together that little bundle of papers, or packed up the suitcase, or counted over the little purse of gold, or even snatched his little property from the cabin. At once, at once, must he climb the stairs and reach the deck or he will never have stairs to climb, nor feet to climb with. Now or never! Quick is the word. Waste a moment and it is all over with you. The fire is upon you, for it tarries not in its march.

So is it with you tonight who fear not God. “Escape for your life,” is a cry for the present moment. Now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation. “Now, now, NOW. This is the only period God has allotted to you! Take care that you use it, lest when your todays are past and you hope to see your tomorrows, you should have to spend your tomorrows in the pit of Hell. Procrastination is not only the thief of time, but the thief of souls. Now is the day of salvation! I have never heard of any other day. I do not know, but I think this is one of the most difficult things in the Gospel ministry, a matter worthy of the Holy Spirit’s power–to make men seriously think about their souls at the present.

I know, young Man, you intend to think of these things when you are ill. You expect to have a long time upon a sickbed and then you suppose all will be right before you die. Who told you you would ever lie upon a sickbed at all? Yours may be a sudden death. And sudden death to such as you are would be sudden damnation. As men stand upon the bank and spring head-first into the water, so may you dash into Hell. Death enters men's doors without knocking. The judgment may follow on the heels of your next sin. And what if you should lie upon a bed of sickness? You will have enough to do to bear the pain, to mourn over your weeping wife and worry yourself about those little children who will he left fatherless–I tell you, Sir, it is hard repenting upon a dying bed.

Do not sew pillows to your armholes and make for yourself this fond hope, that you shall one day be saved. It is now or never, it is now or never with you! I speak as a Prophet of God at this moment, I know I do. There are some of you to whom this now or never is a more applicable thing than you suppose. You will not see the New Year. No Christmas festivities will be yours. You will be at home on Christmas Day, but it will be your long, lost home. "Set your house in order. For you shall die and not live."

As the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, thus says the Lord unto some of you–"There is but a step between you and death." Be warned, then, for as I will meet you on the other side of the stream, at my Master's Judgment Seat, I have bid you give

immediate, instantaneous attention to the Word of God. Consider your ways, O Sinners, born to die! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, O Trembler, and you shall be saved. Trust Him, trust Him! God help you to trust Jesus tonight, for it is now or never with your soul!

Again, this alarm demands of every one of us who are unsaved an undivided attention. You have fifty things to think about. You tell me you have a thousand cares. O Sirs, a man whose life is in danger has no other care than to save his life! Did those who were rescued from the "Amazon" have time to save their money and their gold? We are told that they were utterly destitute when they landed at Margate and what difference did it make? Would not a flush of joy be on their cheeks because their lives were preserved? If one said to his fellow, "Where is your purse?" "Oh," says the other, "never mind my purse, I am in the lifeboat, my life is saved."

What shall it profit you, if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? And what is the loss after all, if you lose the world– if you gain your soul? No, those on board the ship had not time to save their clothes. The instincts of self-preservation made them run, just as they were, half-naked, to the vessel's deck and so must you. I know you will tell me you are not living to make money. If you could just make ends meet, keep your family and supply the wants of your children–that is all–are you not to think of these things? It is well and good. Far be it from me to discourage prudent

carefulness in all matters. It is your business to see to temporal matters, but still your paramount business must be your soul!

Even necessities must not come between your soul and your most serious thoughts. You must see to this, first and foremost, and remember there is a promise about it–"Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And all these things shall be added unto you." Those persons who escaped from the blazing vessel had, some of them, even to suffer in body. We read of one who broke his arm in the medley of the escape, but what of that?

(

I hear since, from the friends of the second mate, that the man did not break his arm). Better to escape with a broken arm than fry in those horrible flames with every bone in its place. It would be very little comfort to the poor passenger to save his bones entire and to have his body consumed. "It is better for you to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire."

You are rightly considerate of your bodies, but still, if that poor body which is to become worm's meat one day is worthy of so much thought, how much more ought you to give to your immortal spirit, which is to live forever with God in Heaven, or with fiends in torment? Think first, I pray you–think chiefly–think now tonight with undivided heart, with consecrated thought, upon your soul. Let comforts go, let wealth go, let raiment go, let life itself go–but

do see to that which is better than life–your soul–your everlasting destiny.

Now the alarm which I have tried to give–"Escape for your life!" seems to me to suggest a very solemn question. "How can I escape?" says one. Do you sincerely ask that question–"What must I do to be saved?" Remember there is but one way of rescue–the lifeboat of faith must put you into the vessel of salvation–Christ Jesus. Stop in your own vessel and you are burned. Leap into those floods of wrath and you are drowned. Get into that boat of saving faith, let that boat bear you into the vessel of Christ Jesus and you are safe! Sinner, the road of salvation is out of self into Christ.

There are only two steps to Heaven–out of self, into Christ. That man who has left himself as a burning vessel behind, left sin and left self-righteousness as a thing to be destroyed–that man who has taken Christ to be his All in All and takes the Cross to be the only thing to which he clings, is safe. Escape, I pray you, for your life, awakened and seeking Sinner, for Jesus is the only foundation! He only is your rock and your salvation–come to Him for shelter and you are saved.

To conclude this matter of alarm, our meditation arouses a very solemn enquiry–Will all be safe? Will all in the vessel escape? What joy must there have been in the captain's heart when he heard that not one had been left to burn in the vessel! Will all escape? Will every hearer in this huge House of Prayer tonight be a singer

in Heaven? Dare we, in the judgment of charity, hope so? Well, well, let us try to hope, if so your charity wishes it, but I fear, I fear it will be hope without any grounds. There are some here who love the drunkard's cup, others who vomit the swearer's oaths, and some who have the proud, self-righteous look which God hates. O that we could hope that these would be transformed by Grace through Jesus Christ, that so they might be saved!

I am, I admit it, very much afraid that all of you will not be saved, but that some of you will perish in your iniquities. It is not, however, our duty to pry into futurity. Let us, therefore, turn to that which far more concerns us–our own personal salvation. The enquiry changes–"Shall I be saved? If there is an alarm given, "Escape for your life!" Shall I be saved? And what if it should be the preacher's lot to be lost forever? What, if after talking to you this morning of being sick of love to Christ, he should have to hear those doleful words, "I never knew you, depart, you cursed!" And what if this were to be the lot of the Church officers who sit around me, or of anyone among you? Brother, you have passed the sacramental cup to others–what if the cup of devils is your portion forever and ever? My Brothers and Sisters in Church fellowship, you may well put the question as did the Apostles of old, "Lord is it I?"–

"Shall I be banished for my life,
And yet forbid to die?

Shall I endure eternal death,

Yet death forever fly?"

Shall it be so? My dear Hearer, you who make no profession of religion, will you ask the question, "Shall I, shall I perish in devouring flames, or shall I escape?" The answer to that question, so far as you are concerned at this moment, must depend upon whether there is now a work of Grace in your heart. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you can never perish. If you do not and will not believe, your destruction is most sure. O God Almighty, You who alone can impress the heart, lead every one of us now to take such sure hold of Christ that we may never perish, neither may any pluck us out of His hand.!

II. My time is fled! Woe is me–I had meant to have spoken with my whole heart upon another topic–GRATITUDE. Well, we will just run over the points, although most briefly. I will hope that you and I are saved. I will trust that we have been put into God's Grace vessel. I will believe that we have laid hold on Christ–may my belief be

O my God, I bless You that I was not permitted to sleep the sleep of death! I thank You for that fever which made me fear, that loss which made me think, that dear dead babe which brought the parent to a Savior's feet. I bless You, Lord, for the minister's earnest voice which shook me in my slumbers, for a mother's tears which fell like cold drops on my sleeping brow and made me wake.

I thank You, O God, that though others slumber, yet, You have awakened me and made me look to my soul's concerns. It is no slight mercy to be able to hear the trumpet of warning! It is a foundation mercy, but it is not the least of mercies to have an awakened conscience.

Secondly, I would thank God and let every Believer join with me that when you and I were awakened, the ship was not out to sea. If the "Amazon" had been far out to sea when the cry of "Fire" was given, what must have been the result? How few could have escaped! But there she was, close to land. You and I, when we were awakened, were not in Hell–not like the rich man, lifting up our eyes where hope could never come! We were still on praying ground, still on pleading terms with God, still where mercy could come to us and Grace could meet us. Sinner, if you have been awakened tonight, thank God for this! Thank Him that the trumpet which wakes you is not the trumpet of the archangel summoning you to judgment, but the silver trumpet of God's messenger of mercy, inviting you to the mercy banquet.

Let us thank God it did not blow harder, for there might have been much trouble in reaching the boat. When you and I were awakened to a sense of sin, it might have been just when death was coming, or when the terrors of conscience would have been too much for us and when the fears of death might have kept us from a Savior. But, blessed be God, when we were aroused there was wind

enough! We were conscience-stricken and smitten, but still not too much, or else the fire had been too vehement and we had not escaped. Thank God, then, that He awakened us while there was really time to avail ourselves of the Covenant lifeboat.

Let us be thankful, again, that we could use the signals. I told you that the vessel sent up its rockets–signals of distress. Ah, what a thousand mercies it was that we could pray. I remember well when this was the only comfort my bursting spirit had, I could pray. Oh, to be on pleading terms with God! Thank God for this, awakened Sinner! Bless God for this! If you have not got so far as being completely saved, yet do praise Him that you are allowed to fire off the rockets of desires, sighs, groans, sobs, tears, longing and panting–and that you can send them up where God can see them. Your cries and groans and tears will yet bring comfort and peace from Heaven through the Lamb's redeeming blood. Rejoice, my beloved Brethren, that the Lord has not abolished a Mercy Seat, nor forgotten to be gracious. He says not, "to the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain." He waits to be gracious. He delights in mercy. Before you call He will answer and while you are yet speaking He will hear.

Thank God that there were good officers on board to direct the passengers. Without firm authority men become a mob, and then, with every appliance which might save, few are rescued. Awakened Sinner, be grateful that you have Gospel ministers. Oh, what a

mercy to have a Gospel ministry! What an awful thing to sit under a half-and-half milk-and water, yes-and-no ministry, as was my lot when under conviction. I attended different places of worship, but what I heard was not the Gospel. And I venture to say it, that a few years ago, in nine places out of ten in London, and in the suburbs and throughout England, such a thing as the Gospel was not preached except by accident.

It IS preached NOW. It is not preached now as it should be, but it is preached now. What I mean by the Gospel is the doctrine that Jesus Christ came to save sinners and that the simple trusting upon Him is saving faith. This is a doctrine which the revival has brought up more clearly and which the revival keeps before the public mind. But before that great movement came, it was a doctrine ignored and cast behind. Too much of the preaching was a dry morality, or else philosophy which might tickle the ears of men who claimed intellect, but could never move the heart. Oh, thank God, poor Sinner, that you hear it rung in your ears–Come as you are! Come as you are! You hear the Gospel sung to you–

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Your blood was shed for me,
And that You bid me come to You,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!
Just as I am–Your love I own,
Has broken every barrier down–

Now, to be Yours, yes, Yours alone,

O Lamb of God, I come! I come!"

We hold up to you no ceremonies, no feelings, no works, no orthodoxies! We only hold up Christ, Christ Crucified, a Substitute for sinners, a Substitute for you if you trust Him. And we tell you again and again, till we half fear of tiring you, that trusting Jesus you are saved! Now we have reason, if saved, to be grateful to God for Gospel officers. Then how grateful ought you and I to be that the ship is come to the rescue. Jesus came all the way from Heaven to earth to save us–"Who though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich." How shall we be grateful enough for this unspeakable gift?–

"O, for this love let rocks and hills

Their lasting silence break,

And all harmonious human tongues

The Savior's praises speak."

Better still–how grateful we ought to be that we have got on board that ship. Oh, joy! Joy! Joy! That blessed step which set me upon Christ! That blessed act which made me one with Him! My soul would repeat now that Grace-worked deed of faith–

"A wounded, weak and helpless worm,

On Christ's kind arms I fall;

Be You my strength and confidence,

My Jesus and my All."

Be grateful for this. And, Sinner, if you can now step into Christ and trust Him with yourself, make earth ring with your joy and make Heaven resound with your praise!

Our gratitude, I think, will be greatest of all when we get safe on shore and look on this old hulk, the burning world, without a fear. We will see her blaze and cast her dreadful splendors over the infinite leagues of space, until beings in faroff worlds shall ask, “What is this? A world on fire, whose elements dissolve with fervent heat.” But we, caught up together with the Lord, to dwell forever with Him, shall look on with complacency, having lost nothing because saved in Him! Having found in Him our Savior, better than all we had before, and being, once and for all on Heaven’s terra firma, never to put to sea again, never to fear tempest, rock, wreck, or fire. But saved! Saved! Saved eternally!

Escape, Sinner, escape for your life! Remember, though thus I talk to you, if you shall escape, Free Grace must have all the praise. And in the language of good Lot, you will have to say–“You have magnified Your mercy in saving my life.” May God send you away with a blessing, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Ge 19:20 • Little Sins

SERMON 0248

L*ittle Sins*

"Is it not a little one?"

Genesis 19:20

THESE words we shall take for a motto, rather than a text in the ordinary acceptation of that term. I shall not this morning attempt to explain the connection. It was the utterance of Lot, when he pleaded for the salvation of Zoar. But I shall take it altogether away from the connection in which it stands and make use of it in another fashion. The great Father of Lies has multitudes of devices by which he seeks to ruin the souls of men. He uses false weights and false balances in order to deceive them. Sometimes he uses false times, declaring at one hour that it is too early to seek the

Lord and at another that it is now too late. And he uses false quantities, for he will declare that great sins are but little and as for what he confesses to be little sins, he makes them afterwards to be nothing at all–mere peccadilloes, almost worthy of forgiveness in themselves. Many souls, I doubt not, have been caught in this trap and being snared thereby, have been destroyed. They have ventured into sin where they thought the stream was shallow and, fatally deceived by its depth, they have been swept away by the strength of the current to that cataract which is the ruin of such vast multitudes of the souls of men.

It shall be my business this morning to answer this temptation and try to put a sword in your hands to resist the enemy when he shall come upon you with this cry–"Is it not a little one?" and tempt you into sin because he leads you to imagine that there is but very little harm in it. "Is it not a little one?"

With regard, then, to this temptation of Satan concerning the littleness of sin, I would make this first answer, the best of men have always been afraid of little sins. The holy martyrs of God have been ready to endure the most terrible torments rather than step so much as one inch aside from the road of truth and righteousness. Witness Daniel–when the king's decree went forth that no man should worship God for such-and-such a time, nevertheless he prayed three times a day as aforetime, with his window open towards Jerusalem, not fearing the king's

commandment. Why could he not have retired into an inner chamber? Why might he not have ceased from vocal prayer and have kept his petitions in his thought and in his heart? Would he not have been as well accepted as when he kneeled, as usual, with the window open, so that all the world might see him?

Ah, but Daniel judged that little as the offense might seem, he would rather suffer death at the jaws of the lion than he would by that little offense provoke the anger of his God, or lead men to blaspheme His holy name, because His servant had been afraid to obey. Mark, too, the three holy children. They are asked by king Nebuchadnezzar simply to bend the knee and worship the golden image which he had set up. How slight the homage! One bend of the knee and all is done. One prostration and they may go their way safely. Not so. They will not worship the golden image which the king has set up. They can burn for God, but they cannot turn from God. They can suffer, but they will not sin. And though all the world might have excused them with the plea of expediency if they had performed that one little act of idol worship, yet they will not do it, but would rather be exposed to the fury of a furnace, seven times heated, than commit an offense against the Most High.

So also among the early Christians. You may have read of that noble warrior for Christ, Martin Arethusa, the bishop. He had led the people to pull down the idol temple in the city over which he presided. And when the apostate emperor Julian came to power, he

commanded the people to rebuild the temple. They were bound to obey on pain of death. But Arethusa all the while lifted up his voice against the evil they were doing, until the wrath of the king fell upon him of a sudden. He was, however, offered his life on condition that he would subscribe so much as a single half penny towards the building of the temple–no, less than that–if he would cast one grain of incense into the censer of the false god he might escape. But he would not do it. He feared God and he would not do the most tiny little sin to save his life. They therefore exposed his body and gave him up to the children to prick him with knives. Then they smeared him with honey and he was exposed to wasps and stung to death. But all the while the grain of incense he would not give. He could give his body to wasps and die in the most terrible pains, but he could not, he would not, he dared not sin against God. A noble example!

Now, Brethren, if men have been able to perceive so much of sin in little transgressions that they would bear inconceivable tortures rather than commit them, must there not be something dreadful after all in the thing of which Satan says, “Is it not a little one?” Men, with their eyes well opened by Divine Grace, have seen a whole Hell slumbering in the most minute sin. Gifted with a microscopic power, their eyes have seen a world of iniquity hidden in a single act, or thought, or imagination of sin. And hence they have avoided it with horror–have passed by and would have

nothing to do with it. If the straight road to Heaven is through flames, through floods, through death itself, they had sooner go through all these torments than turn one inch aside to tread an easy and an erroneous path.

I say this should help us when Satan tempts us to commit little sins–this should help us to the answer, "No, Satan, if God's people think it great, they know better than you do. You are a deceiver. They are true. I must shun all sin, even though you say it is but little." It may be further answered, in reply to this temptation of Satan with regard to little sins, thus–"Little sins lead to great ones. Satan! You bid me commit a small iniquity. I know you, whom you are, you unholy one! You desire me to put in the thin end of the wedge. You know when that is once inserted you can drive it home and split my soul in two. No, stand back! Little though the temptation is, I dread you, for your little temptation leads to something greater and your small sin makes way for something worse."

We all see in nature how easily we may prove this–that little things lead to greater things. If it is desired to bridge a gulf, it is often the custom to shoot an arrow and cross it with a line almost as thin as film. That line passes over and a string is drawn after it and after that some small rope and after that a cable and after that the swinging suspension bridge, that makes a way for thousands. So it is oftentimes with Satan. It is but a thought that he would

shoot across the mind. That thought shall carry a desire. That desire a look. That look a touch. That touch a deed. That deed a habit. And that habit something worse, until the man, from little beginnings, shall be swamped and drowned in iniquity. Little things, we say, lead on to something worse. And thus it has always been. A spark is dropped by some unwary traveler amidst the dry grass of the prairie. It is but a spark–"Is it not a little one?" A child's foot may tread it out–one drop from the rain-cloud may quench it. But ah, what sets the prairie in a blaze? What bids the rolling waves of flame drive before them all the beasts of the field? What is it that consumes the forest, locking it in its fiery arms? What is it that burns down the habitation of man, or robs the reaper of his harvest? It is this solitary spark–the one spark–the breeder of the flames.

So is it with little sins. Keep them back Satan! They are sparks, but the very fire of Hell is only a growth from them. The spark is the mother of conflagration and though it is a little one I can have nothing to do with it. Satan always begins with us as he did with Achan. He showed Achan, first of all, a goodly Babylonian garment and a wedge of gold. Achan looked at it–was it not a little thing to do–to look? Achan touched it–was not that a little thing? How slight a sin–to touch the forbidden thing! He takes it and carries it away to his tent and–here is worse–he hides it. And at length he must die for the awful crime. Oh, take heed of those

small beginnings of sin. Beginnings of sin are like the letting out of water–first, there is an ooze, then a drip, then a slender stream, then a vein of water–and then, at last, a flood–and a rampart is swept before it, a continent is drowned.

Take heed of small beginnings, for they lead to worse. There was never a man yet that came to the gallows but confessed that he began with small thefts–the stealing of a book at school–the pilfering, afterwards, from his master's till leading to the joining of the gang of robbers–the joining of the gang of robbers leading to worse crimes and, at last, the deed was done, the murder was committed which brought him to an ignominious death. Little sins often act as burglars do–burglars sometimes take with them a little child. They put the little child into a window that is too small for them to enter and then he goes and opens the door to let in the thieves. So do little sins act. They are but little ones, but they creep in and they open the door for great ones. A traitor inside the camp may be but a dwarf and may go and open the gates of the city and let in a whole army.

Dread sin. Though it is ever so small, dread it. You cannot see all that is in it. It is the mother of ten thousand mischiefs. The mother of mischief, they say, is as small as an insect's egg. And certainly, the smallest sin has ten thousand mischiefs sleeping within it. St. Augustine gives a picture of how far men will go when they once begin to sin. There was a man who in argument declared that the

devil made flies. “Well,” said the man with whom he was arguing, “If the devil made flies, then it is but little more to say the devil made worms!” “Well” said the other, “I believe it.” “ Well” said the man, “ If the devil made worms, how do you know but what he made small birds?” “Well,” said the other, “It is likely he did!” “Well,” resumed the man with whom he was arguing, “But if he made small birds, why may he not have made big ones? And if he made big birds, why may he not have made man? And if he made man, why may he have not made the world?” “You see,” says St. Augustine, “By one admission, by once permitting the devil to be thought the creator of a fly, the man came to believe that the devil was the Creator.”

Just get one small error into your minds, get one small evil into your thoughts, commit one small act of sin in your life–permit these things to be dandled and fondled, favored, petted and treated with respect and you cannot tell whereunto they may grow. They are small in their infancy–they will be giants when they come to their full growth. You little know how near your soul may be to destruction when you wantonly indulge in the smallest act of sin! Another argument may be used to respond to this temptation of the devil. He says, “Is it not a little one?” “Yes,” we reply, “But little sins multiply very fast.” Like all other little things, there is a marvelous power of multiplication in little sins. As for murder, it is a masterly sin. But we do not often hear of it compared with the

multitude of minor sins. The smaller the guilt, the more frequent it becomes. The elephant has but a small progeny and multiplies slowly. But the aphid has thousands springing from it within an hour. It is even so with little sins–they multiply rapidly, beyond all thought–one becomes the mother of multitudes. And, mark this–little sins are as mighty for mischief in their multitude, as if they were greater sins.

Have you ever read the story of the locusts when they sweep through a land? I was reading but yesterday of a missionary who called all the people together when he heard that the locusts where coming up the valley. And kindling huge fires, they hoped to drive off the living stream. The locusts were but small. But it seemed as if the whole of the blazing fires were quenched–they marched over the dead and burning bodies of their comrades and on they went, one living stream. Before them everything was green, like the garden of Eden. Behind them everything was dry and desert. The vines were barked, the trees had lost every leaf and stretched their naked arms to the sky, as if winter had rent away their foliage. There was not then so much as a single blade of grass, or sprig upon the tree, that even a goat might have eaten. The locusts had done all this and left utter devastation in their track. Why this? The locust is but a little thing! Yes, but in their number how mighty they become!

Dread then a little sin, for it will be sure to multiply. It is not one, it is many of these little sins. The plague of lice, or the plague of flies in Egypt, was perhaps the most terrible that the Egyptians ever felt. Take care of those little insect sins which may be your destruction. Surely if you are led to feel them and to groan under them and to pray to God for deliverance from them, it may be said that in your preservation is the finger of God. But let these sins alone. Let them increase and multiply and your misery is near at hand. Listen not then to the evil voice of Satan when he cries, "Is it not a little one?"

Years ago there was not a single thistle in the whole of Australia. Some Scotchman who very much admired thistles–rather more than I do–thought it was a pity that a great island like Australia should be without that marvelous and glorious symbol of his great nation. He, therefore, collected a packet of thistle seeds and sent it over to one of his friends in Australia. Well, when it was landed, the officers might have said, "Oh, let it in–'is it not a little one?' Here is but a handful of thistle-down, oh, let it come in. It will be but sown in a garden–the Scotch will grow it in their gardens. They think it a fine flower, no doubt–let them have it, it is but meant for their amusement." Ah, yes, it was but a little one. But now whole districts of country are covered with it and it has become the farmer's pest and plague. It was a little one. But, all the worse for that, it multiplied and grew. If it had been a great evil, all men

would have set to work to crush it. This little evil is not to be eradicated and of that country it may be said till doomsday–"Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth." Happy would it have been if the ship that brought that seed had been wrecked. No blessing is it to those of our countrymen there on the other side of the earth, but a vast curse. Take heed of the thistle seed–little sins are like it. Take care they are not admitted into your heart. Endeavor to shun them as soon as Satan presents them. Go, seek by the Grace of God and His Holy Spirit to keep them away. For if not, these little sins will multiply so fast that they will be your ruin and destruction.

Once again–little sins, after all, if you look at them in another aspect, are great. A little sin involves a great principle. Suppose that tomorrow the Austrians should send a body of men into Sardinia. If they only send a dozen it would be equal to a declaration of war. It may be said, "Is it not a little one?–a very small band of soldiers that we have sent?" "Yes," it would be replied, "but it is the principle of the thing. You cannot be allowed with impunity to send your soldiers across the border. War must be proclaimed, because you have violated the frontier and invaded the land." It is not necessary to send a hundred thousand troops into a country to break a treaty. It is true the breach of the treaty may appear to be small–but if the slightest breach is allowed, the principle is gone. There is very much more in principle than men imagine. In a sin against

God, it is not so much the thing itself as the principle of the thing at which God looks. And the principle of obedience is as much broken, as much dishonored by a little sin as by a great sin.

O Man! The Creator has made you to obey Him. You break His law. You say it is but a little breach. Still it is a breach. The law is broken. You are disobedient. His wrath abides on you. The principle of obedience is compromised in your smallest transgression and, therefore, it is great. Besides, I don't know whether the things Christian men call little sins are not, after all, greater than what they call great sins, in some respects. If you have a friend and he does you a displeasure for the sake of ten thousand pounds, you say, "Well, he had a very great temptation. It is true he has committed a great fault, but still he has wronged me to some purpose." But suppose your friend should vex and grieve your mind for the sake of a farthing. What would you think of that? "This is wanton," you would say. "This man has done it out of sheer malevolence toward me." Now, if Adam had been denied by his Maker the whole of Paradise and had been put into a stony desert, I do not think that, had he taken all Paradise to himself, there would have been more sin in that act, than when placed in the midst of the garden, he simply stole one fruit from the forbidden tree. The transgression involved a great principle, because he did it wantonly. He had so little to gain, he had so much to lose when he dishonored God. It has been said that to sin without temptation is to

sin like the devil, for the devil was not tempted when he sinned. And to sin with but little temptation is to sin like the devil.

When there is great temptation offered, I do not say there is any excuse, but when there is none, where the deed is but little, bringing but little pleasure and involving but a small consequence, there is a wantonness about the sin which makes it greater in moral obliquity than many other iniquities that men commit. Yes, you cry out against a great felon, when he is discovered–see of how much he robbed men–see how he wronged the widow and robbed the fatherless! I know it. God forbid that I should make any excuse for him. But that man had a name to maintain. He had thousands of temptations before him to get immensely rich. He thought he never should be discovered. He had a family to keep. He had got involved in expensive habits and there are many things to be said for his extenuation. But you, if you indulge in some slight sin which brings you no pleasure, which involves no important interests–by which you have nothing to gain, I say you sin wantonly. You have committed an act which has in it the very virus and bitterness of willful obstinate, designing disobedience–because there is not even the extenuation, or excuse, or apology, that you should gain something thereby.

Little sins are, after all, tremendous sins, viewed in the light of God's Law. Looked upon as involving a breach of that inviolable standard of right and considered as having been committed

wantonly, I say they are great and I know not that those sins men conceive to be gross and great, are greater and grosser in reality than these. Thus I have given you several arguments with which to answer that temptation, “Is it not a little one?”

Now I am about to speak to the children of God only and I say to them, “Brothers and Sisters if Satan tempts you to say, ‘Is it not a little one?’ ” reply to him, “Ah, Satan, but little though it is, it may mar my fellowship with Christ. Sin cannot destroy but it will annoy. It cannot ruin my soul, but it will soon ruin my peace. You say it is a little one, Satan, but my Savior had to die for it, or otherwise I should have been shut out from Heaven. ‘That little one’ may be like a little thorn in my flesh, to prick my heart and wound my soul. I cannot, I dare not indulge in this little sin, for I have been greatly forgiven and I must greatly love. A little sin in others would be a great sin for me. ‘How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God.’ ”

Is it a little one, Satan? But a little stone in the shoe will make a traveler limp. A little thorn may breed a fester. A little cloud may hide the sun. A cloud of the size of a man’s hand may bring a deluge of rain. Be gone, Satan! I can have nothing to do with you. For since I know that Jesus bled for little sins, I cannot wound His heart by indulging in them afresh. A little sin, Satan? Has not my Master said, “Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.” Lo, these little things do

mischief to my tender heart. These little sins burrow in my soul and soon make it to become a very den and hole of the wild beasts that Jesus hates. They soon drive Him away from my spirit so that He will hold no comfortable fellowship and communion with me. A great sin cannot destroy a Christian, but a little sin can make him miserable. Jesus will not walk with His people unless they drive out every known sin. He says, “If you keep My Commandments you shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father’s Commandments and abide in His love.”

There are very many Christians in the world that do not see their Savior’s face by the month together and seem to be quite content without His company. I understand you not, nor do I wish to know how it is, that you can reconcile your souls to the absence of your Lord. A loving wife, without her husband for months and years, seems to me to be sorely tried. Surely it must be an affliction for a tender child to be separated from his father. We know that in our childhood it was always so and we looked forward to his return home with joy. And are you a child of God, yet happy without seeing your Father’s face? What? you the spouse of Christ and yet content without His company? Surely, surely, surely, you have fallen into a sad state. You must have gone astray, if such is your experience, for the true chaste spouse of Christ mourns like a dove without her mate, when He has left her.

Ask, then, the question, what has driven Christ from you? He hides His face behind the walls of your sins. That wall may be built up of little pebbles, as easily as of great stones. The sea is made of drops, the rocks are made of grains. And ah, surely the sea which divides you from Christ may be filled with the drops of your little sins. And the rock which is to wreck your boat may have been made by daily working of the coral insects of your little sins. Therefore, take heed, for if you would live with Christ and walk with Christ and see Christ and have fellowship with Christ, take heed, I pray you, of the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.

And now, leaving the children of God awhile, I turn myself to address others of you who have some thought with regard to your souls, but who could not yet be ranked among those that fear God with a true heart. To you, I know, Satan often offers this temptation–"Is it not a little one?" May God help you to answer him whenever he thus attacks you, "Is it not a little one?" And so, young man, the devil has tempted you to commit the first petty theft. "Is it not a little one?" And so he has bid you, young man, for the first time in your life to spend the day of rest in foolish pleasure. It was but a little one, he said, and you have taken him at his word and you have committed it. It was but a little one and so you have told a lie. It was but a little one and you have gone into the assembly of the frivolous and mixed in the society of scorners.

It was but a little one, there could not be much hurt in it, it could not do much mischief to your soul. Ah, stop awhile. Do you know that a little sin, if wantonly indulged, will prevent your salvation? “The foundation of God stands sure having this seal, the Lord knows them that are His and let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”

Christ will reveal salvation from all his sins to the man who hates all his sins. But if you keep one sin to yourself, you shall never have mercy at His hands. If you will forsake all your ways and turn with full purpose of heart to Christ, the biggest sin you have ever committed shall not destroy your soul. But if a little sin be harbored, your prayers will be unheard, your sighs disregarded and your earnest cries shall return into your bosom without a blessing. You have been in prayer lately, you have been seeking Christ, you have been praying with all your might that God would meet with you. Now months have rolled over your head–you are not yet saved, not yet have you received the comfortable assurance of your pardon.

Young man, is it not likely that some little known sin is still harbored in your heart? Mark, then, God will never be at one with you till you and your sins are two. Part with your sins, or else part with all hope. Though you hide but so much as a grain of sin back from God, He will not, He cannot have any mercy on you. Come to Him just as you are, but renounce your sins. Ask Him to set you

free from every lust, from every false way, from every evil thing, or else, mark you, you shall never find grace and favor at His hands. The greatest sin in the world, repented of, shall be forgiven, but the least unrepented sin shall sink your soul lower than the lowest Hell. Mark then, again, Sinner, you who indulge in little sins sometimes– these little sins show that you are yet in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.

Rowland Hill tells a curious tale of one of his hearers who sometimes visited the theater. He was a member of the Church. So going to see him, he said, I understand Mr. So-and-So, you are very fond of frequenting the theater. No, Sir, he said, that's false. I go now and then just for a great treat, still I don't go because I like it. It is not a habit of mine. Well, said Rowland Hill, suppose someone should say to me, Mr. Hill, I understand you eat carrion and I should say, no, no, I don't eat carrion. It is true, I now and then have a piece of stinking carrion for a great treat. Why, he would say, you have convicted yourself, it shows that you like it better than most people because you save it up for a special treat. Other men only take it as common daily food, but you keep it by way of a treat. It shows the deceitfulness of your heart and manifests that you still love the ways and wages of sin.

Ah, my Friends, those men that say little sins have no vice in them whatever, do but give indications of their own character. They show which way the stream runs. A straw may let you know which

way the wind blows, or even a floating feather. And so may some little sin be an indication of the prevailing tendency of the heart. My Hearer, if you love sin, though it is but a little one, your heart is not right in the sight of God. You are still a stranger to Divine Grace. The wrath of God abides on you. You are a lost soul unless God changes your heart.

And yet, another remark here. Sinner, you say it is but a little one. But do you know that God will damn you for your little sins? Look angry now and say the minister is harsh. But will you look angry at your God in the day when He shall condemn you forever? If there were a good man in a prison today and you did not go to see him, would you think that a great sin? Certainly not, you say, I should not think of doing such a thing. If you saw a man hungry and you did not feed him, would you think that a great sin? No, you say, I should not.

Nevertheless, these are the very things for which men are sent to Hell. What said the Judge? "I was hungry and you gave Me no meat, thirsty and you gave Me no drink, I was sick and in prison and you visited me not. Forasmuch as you have not done this unto the least of these, My Brethren, you have not done it unto Me." Now, if these things, which we only consider to be little sins, actually send myriads to Hell, ought we not to stop and tremble before we talk lightly of sin, since little sins may be our eternal destroyers? Ah, Man, the pit of Hell is dug for little sins. An

eternity of woe is prepared for what men call little sins. It is not alone the murderer, the drunkard, the whoremonger, that shall be sent to Hell. The wicked, it is true, shall be sent there, but the little sinner with all the nations that forget God shall have his portion there also. Tremble, therefore, on account of little sins.

When I was a little lad, I one day read at family prayer the chapter in the Revelations concerning the "bottomless pit." Stopping in the midst of it, I said to my grandfather, "Grandfather, what does this mean–'the bottomless pit?' " He said, "Go on child, go on." So I read that chapter, but I took great care to read it the next morning, also. Stopping again I said, "Bottomless pit, what does this mean?" "Go on," he said, "Go on." Well it came the next morning and so on for a fortnight. There was nothing to be read by me of a morning but this same chapter for explained it should be if I read it a month. And I can remember the horror of my mind when he told me what the idea was. There is a deep pit and the soul is falling down–oh how fast it is falling! There! The last ray of light at the top has disappeared and it falls on–on–on and so it goes on falling–on–on–on–for a thousand years! "Is it not getting near the bottom yet? Won't it stop?" No, no–the cry is, on–on–on, "I have been falling a million years, is it not near the bottom yet?" No, you are no nearer the bottom yet–it is the "bottomless pit." It is on–on–on and so the soul goes on falling, perpetually, into a deeper depth

still, falling forever into the “bottomless pit”–on–on–on, into the pit that has no bottom!

Woe without termination, without hope of it’s coming to a conclusion. The same dreadful idea is contained in those words, “The wrath to come.” Mark, Hell is always “the wrath to come.” If a man has been in Hell a thousand years, it is still “to come.” As to what you have suffered in the past it is as nothing, in the dread account, for still the wrath is “to come.” And when the world has grown gray with age and the fires of the sun are quenched in darkness, it is still “the wrath to come.” And when other worlds have sprung up and have turned into their palsied age, it is still “the wrath to come.” And when your soul, burnt through and through with anguish, sighs at last to be annihilated, even then this awful thunder shall be heard, “the wrath to come–to come–to come.” Oh, what an idea! I know not how to utter it! And yet for little sins, remember you incur “the wrath to come.”

Oh, if I am to be damned, I would be damned for something. But to be delivered up to the executioner and sent into “the wrath to come” for little sins which do not even make me famous as a rebel, this is to be damned indeed! Oh that you would arise, that you would flee from the wrath to come, that you would forsake the little sins and fly to the great Cross of Christ to have little sins blotted out and little offenses washed away. For oh–again I warn you–if you die with little sins unforgiven, with little sins unrepented of,

there shall be no little Hell–the great wrath of the great King is ever to come, in a pit without a bottom, in a Hell the fire of which never shall be quenched and the worm of which never shall die.

Oh, “the wrath to come! The wrath to come!” It is enough to make one’s heart ache to think of it. God help you to flee from it. May you escape from it now, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Ge 19:23 • The Flight to Zoar

SERMON 2642

T*he Flight To Zoar*

"The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar."

Genesis 19:23

THE destruction of Sodom was, undoubtedly, a literal fact. And the record of it in Genesis is as true a piece of history as any event that is recorded by Tacitus or Josephus. But it was also intended to be a great parabolic lesson to us–a lesson in the shape of a parable–by which we might receive both instruction and blessing. The Old Testament is a great Book of texts and the New Testament contains the sermons upon them. Lot's wife was in the Old Testament as a text and in the New Testament we have the sermon upon it, "Remember Lot's wife." And wherever, my Brothers and Sisters, I

find our Lord Jesus Christ, or any of His Apostles referring to an incident in the Old Testament, I always think it is our business to look at that event to which they refer. In the writings of the old Puritans, which I delight to read, I often find in the margin a hand pointing to some special words which it is requisite that the reader should particularly note and read with care. And when I see the hand put opposite the passage, by some old lover of the Truth of God, who, in days of yore, read the book, I generally turn to it with eagerness, to see what is the gem pointed at by the finger.

Now, I think, when our Savior said, "Remember Lot's wife," He did, as it were, put a hand on the margin of the Bible, pointing to the whole incident describing the destruction of Sodom. He did, in effect, say, "Mark that event. Look at it closely, for there is more in it than there seems to be." And as there is something instructive in Lot's wife becoming a pillar of salt, there is something to be learned from every step of Lot's journey–and from every incident connected with it. If it is so, I shall not be regarded as being whimsical and fanciful if I assert that, in this text, I believe there is much instruction in the simple incident recorded here–"The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar."

I will soon map out my sermon. Lot was nearly in the dark till he reached Zoar–thesun was risen upon the earth as soon as Lot was in Zoar. the same moment which saw the sun rise on Lot saw the fiery hail fall on Sodom. We have here three facts which I think are three

pictures illustrating three great Truths of God with regard to the sinner's experience.

First, then, LOT WAS NEARLY IN THE DARK ON THE ROAD HE RAN TILL HE REACHED ZOAR.

Mark, when he first started, the Scripture tells us, in the 15 th verse, that the morning rose–there was the first graydawn when the angels hurried him out of Sodom! it was just the breaking of the day and it is said that as soon as Lot entered into Zoar, the sun was thoroughly risen, but not till then. He had to find his way through shadows and run, to a great degree, in the dark.

Ah, my Friends, that was a solemn moment when those notable guests turned their host out of doors and did it all out of love and kindness, too! When the two angels took Lot, his wife and his daughters by the hand and dragged them forth, and bade them run, it was a solemn moment. The heavens were heavy with God's wrath and only waited until Lot was safely housed to burst in impetuous torrents upon the devoted cities. Do you not see them, or, rather, do you not fancy you can see their black figures in the gloom of the twilight? You scarcely understand what it can be–there are two men pushing forth a family into the street. You see them next grasping their hands and with loving haste driving them forward. You now hear a voice, something more than earthly, speaking in the celestial language, crying, "Escape for your life!" And now mark the man, his wife and his daughters fleeing–fleeing

from their own house–fleeing from their own kinsmen and acquaintances! A woman leaving her own sons-in-law and wives leaving their own husbands to perish in the city! Watch their flight! See them as they flee across the plain–they often stumble, for the way is not clear before them–and they little know where they are going. They only see the dark shadow of the mountain looming in the distance and they run there, in the darkness, with all their might.

Now, Lot running in the dark is the picture of a poor sinner when he comes out of Sodom. You who have just beenawakened and convinced of sin, must not expect that you will have the sunlight of God's favor all at once. There must first come into your house the angel of conviction to thrust you out of your abode of ruin. After you have run a while, you will then have sunlight, joy and peace. But in your running, while you are seeking the Savior, you must expect to run in the darkness–and if you do expect it, you will not be disappointed. Oh how dark it is to a poor sinner when he is first brought to know his state by nature, before the blessed remedy of Grace has been applied to him by the Holy Spirit! Look at him–tears follow each other down his cheeks in one perpetual race! He weeps almost all day and all night. And if he rests for a while for very sorrow, his dreams disturb him–he is always miserable–men call him mad, for he is as one demented. He talks to himself in doleful language and, as he goes about his business, he moans and

sighs, “Oh, that!” And, “Ah!” And, “Would that!” Monosyllables that no man understands, but which are well known in their inward meaning both to God and to his own heart! He has no ray of hope. He believes he is shut out from God forever and he thinks that God is just in having hidden the light of His Countenance from him.

He does not murmur against the Most High, but never was man so near to complaining as he is. He is ready to layviolent hands on himself, for he says he cannot bear his existence. He cries with David, “I am weary with my groaning! All night I make my bed swim; I water my couch with my tears!” “Day and night Your hand is heavy upon me.” He turns to the Book of Job and he reads the Patriarch’s doleful cries and declares that he could say the same. And all the mournful words of David or Jeremiah, he applies to himself. “I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop,” he says. “I am like a pelican of the wilderness. I am like an owl of the desert. I have no comfort, no peace, no joy. God’s mercy is clean gone from me forever! He will no longer be mindful of me!”

Now, dear Friends, please remember that, to a greater or lesser degree, this always is and always must be the condition of a sinner when he is seeking the Savior. O you who are in the dark, remember that you are only where thousands of others have been! Think it not a strange thing that you are subject to this eclipse–others have been eclipsed, too–and all those who have found the Sun of Righteousness have had to run through the dark to get to

Him! There must be a dark tunnel before we can get at Christ and we must grope through worse than an Egyptian night before we behold the face of God with joy!

Perhaps I may be asked what it is that makes it so dark to a poor sinner while he is seeking Christ. I think I may tell you, very briefly, it is partly his own ignorance. Poor Soul, he does not know enough about the Savior, nor enoughabout the plan of salvation to cheer him. Very likely he has never heard the way of salvation preached in all his life. That may be true and yet he may have attended a chapel–as chapels go in these times–for many a year! He does not understand the simple A B C of the Gospel, the sinner's sinnership the only argument to prove that he has an interest in Christ's salvation. He does not understand the Atonement–he cannot make it out how God can be just and yet pardon such a wretch as he is. "All this ignorance necessarily causes darkness." And, mark you, that mistakes concerning the Gospel are never little things–they are always dangerous, they are always painful. Sinners have more griefs than they need have because they have less knowledge than they should have.

Sometimes, too, this darkness arises from mistakes concerning the Gospel. There is not so much ignorance as there iserror with regard to it–by which word, I mean, not a mistake willfully committed, but a mistake ignorantly committed. I know some people who understand the theory of salvation quite well, but they

have a mistaken idea as to its application, or else, perhaps, they read it the wrong way upwards. I know many who do not neglect the Scriptures, but they begin reading about election and predestination before they know anything of conviction. So, often, the darkness of the sinner arises from misapprehension concerning the Gospel.

Many a time, too, the poor soul is running after Christ in the dark because he has got legal ideas in his head. ThatMr. Legality is the ruin of many and, after all we do and say to him, he still lives on! You know how Martin Luther said that he preached Justification by Faith every day because he found that the people forgot it every day. In one of his quaint sermons, he says, "I feel as if I could take my book and beat this doctrine into your heads because you will never remember that you are not saved by your own good works, but by the righteousness of Christ." A sinner may be told, as plainly as possible, that all he can do is less than nothing–that salvation is all of Grace from first to last–but that crafty old devil will not let him believe it. He will always lead him to think that he must do something,or

feel something before he can take Jesus Christ to be his All-in-All! And so legality, like a black dragon, spreads its wings between the soul and God's Light and shuts out every ray of comfort from the poor desponding spirit.

Moreover, this darkness is caused principally by conscience and by Satan. It is a strange thing, but, sometimes, a sinner's conscience and the devil will strike hands. When Mr. Conscience is blowing his dreadful trumpet and startling the sleepy sinner, he is doing good service. But, sometimes, after the sinner is thoroughly awakened, the devil comes and whispers to Mr. Conscience–and in such a voice that it seems as if an angel said it–"Blow on, Mr. Conscience! Blow a still more dreadful blast and I will help you." And the devil comes in and, with his awful yells, he makes a thousand times worse noise than even conscience does–and the poor soul is bewildered, terror-stricken and well-nigh driven mad! "Oh," cries Satan, "you have been a sinner beyond the reach of Christ's mercy!" "Yes," says conscience, "that you have!" "Oh," says the devil, "you have committed every crime that flesh can commit." "Yes," says conscience, "that's true!" And he echoes every word that Satan says.

In comes the devil, and says, "You have committed the unpardonable sin." "No doubt," says conscience, "I always told you so." "And now," says Satan, "there is no hope for you–you must be cast away forever." "Yes," says conscience, "you must be cast away forever! There is no way of escape for such a wretch as you are." And when conscience and the devil get to blowing the same trumpet, it is a dreadful noise, indeed! And there is not a soul in the world that can endure its life when both Satan and

conscience are making such a furious noise! No wonder, my dear Friends, it should be dark with the sinner when he is running on the road to Heaven! No wonder that before he finds the Savior, there should be a doleful cry in his ears, if Satan and conscience are both assailing him! I know that I do not like my conscience to be against me, even without the devil. Conscience, when he is noisy, is not a very comfortable housemate–certainly, we would rather have him still and quiet than always thundering in our ears. But when Hell and conscience go together, I say again, there is no soul that can long bear its existence, except God, in sovereign mercy, shall either support the soul or put a speedy stop to the noise!

Perhaps you ask me, "Why does not the poor sinner look to Jesus?" Ah, that is the very point of his difficulty! He does not look to Jesus because he does not think that Jesus Christ died for such a wretch as he! You know, it is one thing for you to talk about a sinner looking to Jesus when he is in the dark, and quite another thing to do it when you are in the dark, yourself. It is a blessed thing when the Lord enables a poor sinner to turn his eyes to Calvary and see the brightness of Jesus. But there are, often, long days and dreary nights before the sinner learns his own sinfulness and is enabled to look to the Savior. "But," says one, "why does he not go hear a good minister preach? Surely that would help him out of his trouble." My dear Friends, we try to preach the Gospel as

plainly as we can, but it seems that we only rivet the chains on some people.

There is a poor soul in this place now–I have talked with her many times. I know her sad condition and I have often shaped my discourse so as to meet her case. Many times I have thought that the Lord has given me some sweet word that would break the gates of brass and set the imprisoned one at liberty. It has taken a little of the pride out of me and shown me how impossible it is for man, when he labors the hardest, to bring a soul out of bondage before the Lord's promised hour of redemption comes. "But," says one, "why do they not turn to the Bible and lay hold on some precious Truth of God! I do so and find comfort from it." Yes, my dear Friends, and they do turn to the Bible just as you do, yet they find no comfort, for they cannot lay hold on the promises. I know when I was, for many a month, in bondage, I used to read the Bible through–and the threats were all printed in capitals, but the promises were in such small type that, for a long time, I could not make them out! And when I did make them out, I did not believe they were mine. But the threats were all my own–I was sure of it!

"There," I said, "when it says, 'He that believes not shall be damned,' that means me." When I read, concerning Christ, "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him," then I thought I was shut out. When I read, "He found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears,"

“Ah,” I thought, “that is myself again.” And when I read, “That which bears thorns and briers is rejected and is near to cursing,” “Ah,” I said, “that describes me to the last iota!” And when I heard the Master say, “Cut it down; why cumbers it the ground?” “Ah,” I thought, “that is my text–He will have me down before very long and not let me cumber the ground any more.” Butwhen I read, “Ho, every one that thirsts, come you to the waters,” I said, “That does not belong to me, I am sure.” And when I read, “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden,” “No,” I said, “that belongs to my brother, to my sister,” or those I knew round about me, for they were laboring and heavy laden, I thought, but I was not. And though, God knows, I would weep and cry and lament till my heart was breaking within me, if any man had asked me whether I sorrowed for sin, I would have told him “No, I never had any true sorrow for sin” “Well, do you not feel the burden of sin?” “No.” “But you really are a convinced sinner?” “No,” I would have said, “I am not.”

Is it not strange that poor sinners, when they are coming to Christ, are so much in the dark that they cannot see their own hands? They are so much in the dark that they cannot see themselves! And though God has been pleased to work the good work in them and give them godly fear and a tender conscience, they will stand up and declare that they have neither of those blessings, that in them there is not any good thing and that God has not looked on them

nor loved them! But, strange as this is, that is how souls go to Christ. They are like Lot going to Zoar–they are all in the dark and can see nothing until they come to the Savior.

II. Now think of the second fact. NO SOONER WAS LOT IN ZOAR THAN THE SUN WAS UP.

Once he was inside the gate of that little city, the sun shone forth in all its brightness! I daresay Lot thought, “Well, I wish it had risen a little earlier. Oh, how pleased I would have been if I had had a little of that light while running across the plain!” So, when we are brought to the Lord Jesus, we often say, “I wish I had had a little of this peace when I was in bondage. Oh, if I could have had one cupful of this river of joy I am now drinking! When I was so thirsty, what a blessing it would have been!” But God knows best. Depend upon it, my Brothers and Sisters–if one ray of sunlight more had been good for Lot, he would have had it! And if, poor tried Sinner, one gleam of comfort more than you now have, would be good for you, God would not deny it to you. But He keeps you in the dark for your good, as He shall ultimately bring you into the light for your good!

Lot, when he reached Zoar, had the sunlight. And when the sinner gets to Christ, then he gets sunlight, too. Whenthe poor soul is widowed of all its hopes and bereaved of all its trust. When it is reduced to beggary and in a penniless condition. When it has its feet cut from under it and its hands shot away. When it has nothing

left to call its own, but is reduced to death's door. In the hour of its extremity, then is God's gracious opportunity! Then, when the spirit casts itself wholly, without reserve, upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus and puts implicit trust in Him who lived and died to work, and weave, and spin, and dye a righteousness for poor sinners–I say, then, for the first moment, the sinner gets joy in his heart! Do not expect, my dear Hearers, that you will ever get any comfort while you are running anywhere except to Christ. Expect the comfort only when you get to Him. You may have just a gleam or two of light beforehand, as Lot did, but you will not have much more.

And remember, it is no use your running anywhere except to Christ, for, though you run ever so fast, you will onlyrun into deeper darkness unless you run to Him–

"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Redemption in full through His blood."

That very moment his burden rolls off his shoulders, his chains fall to the earth and he is free! That moment his sores are all healed, his wounds are all bound up and his flowing blood is stanched forever. Have you, dear Friend, ever felt that instantaneous change which works such joy as this? If you have, then I am not uttering a strange thing when I say that the sun has

risen upon you! Oh, that moment, when the sinner first starts up, clean rid of guilt on his conscience! I thought I could have leaped from earth to Heaven, at one spring, when I first saw my sins drowned in the Redeemer's blood! You know what John Bunyan says–to repeat an often-quoted tale–"I wanted," said he, "to even tell the crows on the plowed land what God had done for my soul!"

Did you ever follow a poor simple convert as soon as he knows the Lord? He runs home and calls his neighbors together and says, "I have found the Lord Jesus." Probably they will begin laughing at him, but he cannot understand what there is to laugh at, for he says, "My Master is a precious and blessed Master–He has taken all my sins away!" And he will go on telling the simple story till, perhaps, some of them are melted by it, though the rest may scoff. The joy, the to Paradise that the earth ever saw! On the day that our sins are pardoned, God sets all the bells of Heaven ringing–and then the bells of our heart chime in melody! On the day when God is pleased to blot out our sins, He hangs every lane and every alley of Mansoul with splendid flags and colors, gilded lamps and bright jewels! Then He bids sweet music play in every part of the city and He makes the fountains run with wine–and He gives hogsheads of the precious liquid for poor souls to drink–souls that have been faint and dying and thirsty! Oh, that marriage day, when the soul is advanced to Christ! That day, when, for the first time, it rides in the chariot of Mercy and sits in the same seat with its Well-Beloved!

Oh, that first hour, when Jesus puts the ring of His eternal love on the finger of our experience and whispers, “You are Mine,” and our heart says to Jesus, “I am Yours.”

Oh, that moment! Surely, Heaven itself is not happier! All the difference between that moment and Heaven is that Heaven is a great piece of tapestry and this is one of the threads. “The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar,” so the Light of God’s Countenance rises upon poor sinners when they come to Jesus!

III. Now, thirdly, we have to consider a sadder fact. GOD CAN DO TWO THINGS AT A TIME.

With His right hand, He wheeled the sun up the steeps of Heaven and bade it shine upon Lot. And with the other He opened the batteries of Heaven that they might rain their fire and brimstone upon Sodom. Let us remember that God'stwo hands are always at work in that way–from the very beginning, that is always what He has done. With one hand, He shut Noah in the ark and with the other He sent forth the floods of the everlasting cisterns and let the fountains of the great deep burst upon the earth. With one hand he smote the Red Sea and bade Israel walk through it dry-shod and with the other He cast the waters down into their place and drowned Pharaoh and all his hosts. And now look at Him–with one hand He lights the sun–and with the other hand He darkens Sodom

with the smoke of the devouring flames! Ah, Friends, remember that this is what shall be done all the story through!

A day is coming when we who, like poor Lot, have been running to Heaven in the dark, with many clouds of fear and much gloom and sorrow, will reach the river of death! And when the Christian comes to die, God the mighty Savior is pleased to take the film from his eyes and enables him to see the angels! He opens wide his eye and bids him behold the glorious City that is built on high and those shining ones that perpetually traverse its streets! He opens his ears and bids him listen to the hallelujahs of the blessed and then, sometimes, He catches away his spirit and seems to waft it almost over Jordan, till, before the man dies, he says, "Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, only God knows, but I have been caught up to the third Heaven and have seen and heard things which mortals cannot utter." Oh, who can describe the raptures of the dying saint, the glories of that moment when God is pleased to cut the fetters that bind us to our clay and give us leave to soar into His Presence?!

But while God is doing that with His right hand, what is He doing with His left? He is smoothing the path of His children to the grave, but what is He doing to the wicked? He is not smoothing their path. "Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone and a horrible tempest." When they are dying, He draws no curtains around them, except the black curtains of doom! When

they are expiring, no angels attend their deathbed–but grim fiends are waiting there. The left hand of God falls heavily upon the wicked man and as he is entering the world of spirits, God sometimes gives him a foretaste and prelude of the horrors of Hell. His right hand wheels the sun to give light to the Christian and bids him look to Heaven–but His left hand rains down a tempest on the wicked and bids him dread to die!

And now follow the two spirits out of this world. The vital spark of the Christian has fled–

"In vain my fancy tries to paint
The moment after death,
The glories that surround the saint,
When yielding up his breath."

The right hand of God is under the saint and in love He embraces him! God upholds His child in the floods. He whispers, "I am with you, Israel, passing through the stream; be not afraid, underneath you are the everlasting arms." Listen to the shouts of victory! Mark the calm composure of the countenance and see the joy flashing in the eyes! This is what God's right hand is doing to the righteous. But what is His left hand doing to the wicked! My dear Brothers and Sisters, I dare not attempt to describe the sinner as he dies! And when he is dead, it were too awful for me to suppose how he feels the moment his spirit is out of his body. Oh, what an awful sensation that must be when the first pang of Hell shoots through

the soul! My imagination can just mount to it, but I cannot go further. That man was a blasphemer–how must he feel imagine that solitary moment–for I should suppose there is but one such–although eternity is horrible, there can scarcely be more than one moment so new with horror, so dolefully novel with torment as when the soul is launched upon that everlasting sea, the waves of which are fire, and the depths of which are Hell! I cannot tell all that it means. I only know that these are the Lord's own words, "Consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there is none to deliver."

And now comes the Last Great Day! The world is standing before God's bar. Look what He is doing with His righthand! He is beckoning the righteous to Glory! He is adorning their heads with crowns that excel the sun in brightness! He is girding their loins with snow-white robes of immaculate purity! He is touching their lips and making them sing like cherubim! He is setting their hearts on fire with the bliss of Heaven and kindling their spirits with everlasting Glory! He is lifting them up and making them sit together with Christ, far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named! See how the sun is risen upon them! Describe if you can, or imagine if you dare, the brightness of the sunlight of Glory when it shall dawn upon redeemed man in the day of the final account! Look, it is a sunshine without a cloud! It is

a sun without an eclipse! Look, see, their happy faces! Listen to their joyous songs!–

"No groans do mingle with the songs
That warble from immortal tongues."

Words fail me to depict the bright sunlight of the Savior's love as it shines on every happy saint! Thought cannot let me tell the brightness of the Glory that shall stream from the brow of the eternal Father when He shall smile upon His wellbeloved children! And who can describe the Glory of the Sacred Spirit when, in all the riches of His fullness, He shall beam in the eye and heart of every blood-bought soul? This is what God is doing with His right hand–leading all His saints to Heaven and setting them upon thrones forever and ever!

And what is He doing with His left hand? No, pardon me, excuse me from the task of picturing that dread work of Judgment! I might, perhaps, say things that would be horrible, terrible and doleful–yet, even then, my speech would fall infinitely short of the terrible reality! What is God doing to the wicked? He is unloosing the loins of the mighty and breaking the iron sinews of their necks! What is God doing to the wicked? He is alighting them with terror and driving them mad with despair! See them as they fly from His Presence! Listen to them as they shriek in their agony! There they go–down, down, down–to the gulf of everlasting woe! What is God doing with His left hand? He is hurling fire upon them! He is

launching thunderbolts! What is He doing? O earth, I see you shaking! O stars, I behold you vanishing from the vault of night! Sun, you are quenched! Moon, you are a clot of blood! I see the heavens stripped of their light and the glorious Son of God seated on His snow-white Throne! And I see sinners trembling at their everlasting doom! I see them bite their tongues, that, like firebrands, scorch their mouths. I see them dying, but not dead! Damned, but not annihilated–not ceasing to be–forever bruised beneath the foot of vengeance and yet never crushed out of existence! O my God, no mortal tongue can tell this dreary tale! Had I been dead and passed the burning lake, and smelt the sulfurous flame, then, perhaps, I might have spoken of all these terrible realities, but tonight I cannot speak! Take your Bibles and read of the fire that cannot be quenched, of the worm that dies not, of the Pit that is bottomless–and remember that this is what God is doing with His left hand!

The sun had risen upon Zoar and the fire was falling upon Sodom. Ah, Sinner, will it not be an awful thing to see the contrast between you and the righteous? If you perish in your ungodly state, it will make your Hell more awful when you behold, afar off, the righteous exalted in Heaven! Nothing makes the famished man more hungry than to see others feasting when he has nothing! O young man, what will it be to see your mother there in Heaven and you cast out? O young woman, will you see your companion

glorified with Jesus and you cast away with devils? O husband, will you find yourself crying, with Dives, for a drop of water, while your wife is in the Presence of Jesus? Ah, son, will you see your parents glorified and you, yourself, cast out? Set the two in contrast–look on this picture and on that! God give you Grace to bow the knee and "kiss the Son." And if He has taught you your need of a Savior, may He give you Grace to accept the hearty invitation I would tender you in His name, "Come, and welcome, Sinner, come!"

Ge 19:27 • The Smoke of Their Torments

SERMON 0602

T*he Smoke Of Their Torments*

"And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord. Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. "

Genesis 19:27, 28

EARLY in the morning Abraham sought that favored spot where but yesterday God had been pleased to manifest Himself and where he had been favored with a season of extraordinary communion. Where should the Believer go, but to that choice place, dear to his heart, where he has communed with the Lord?–

“Who that knows the worth of prayer,

But wishes to be often there?”

It is a high privilege, the highest which mortals can enjoy, to talk with God, to plead with Him, to use arguments and to prevail. Such Divine Grace had Abraham found. No marvel that he goes back to the place where God had thus drawn near to him. Doubtless one reason why he rose early and went to the place and looked towards Sodom was an anxious desire to know how his prayers had speeded.

You remember he put a last “perhaps” to the Lord–“Perhaps ten shall be found there, And He said, I will not destroy it for ten’s sake.” He hopes, perhaps, that he need not go any further. He stops, for he feels sure in his heart that there must be ten righteous there! He turns his eyes to the quarter of the horizon where Sodom and Gomorrah should stand. So, when you have prayed, look out for answers. Elijah said to his servant, “Go and look towards the sea”–so say to your hopes–“Go and look towards the sea.” If you have asked for rain, expect a cloud. If you have sought mercy, expect that God will stretch out His hand and bestow it upon you.

But God does not always answer His children’s prayers just as they would desire. Besides, His children are sometimes slack in asking and therefore they do not get what they desire. So Abraham, as he looked towards Sodom–instead of seeing the verdant well-watered plain and the roofs and spires of the city, saw nothing but

black smoke and a lurid glare going up to Heaven like the smoke of a furnace.

It is remarkable that he does not appear to have observed the storm as it came down from Heaven! From this fact we may infer how rapid the destruction of the cities must have been! God rained fire out of Heaven upon Sodom–it seems to have been done in a moment. The whole plain was destroyed. And all that Abraham saw after he rose up, which was probably just at sunrise, was merely the smoke that followed the conflagration.

So does God drive His enemies away. As wax is melted before the fire, as the smoke is driven before the wind, so does the enemy perish before the breath of God when He comes forth out of His hiding place to punish sin. Can you now picture to yourselves the reverent Patriarch, as he leans upon his staff and looks with wondering gaze towards the smoking furnace? What must have been his thoughts? What a spectacle for him to gaze upon–from the very spot where he had held communion with God!

Perhaps he could not have looked upon it from any other spot. He would have been too much afraid, too full of trembling. But there he felt safe. Standing where the Lord had talked with him he felt secure. And he could look even into that gruesome glare and that terrible blackness without dismay.

And now I want to summon you, my dear Christian Friends, to the scene of your own most hallowed privileges–to the spot, as it

were, on which Divine Grace has been shown most clearly to your souls and intercessions have been poured out most freely from your hearts. From there I would have you lift up your eyes. To what, do you ask, would I draw your attention? Ah, then I want you to look upon the smoke of the torments of lost spirits. I want believing eyes to gaze upon that place, "where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched."

Only mind that you stand in the place where God has communed with you, beneath the Cross, where the blood shall drop upon you and you shall feel the sense of pardoned sin! From no other place can we view the wrath of God with proper and profitable emotions. But standing there our spirits shall be chastened, our souls comforted and with tears standing in our eyes–tears of gratitude and contrition–we shall venture to look upon that dark and terrible gulf where the wicked lie and shall derive some profit from the sight, even as Abraham doubtless did.

First, then, tonight, let me suggest the emotions which should be awakened in the Christian's spirit when he takes a view of the wrath to come. Secondly, let me gather up some lessons which God teaches to His people and to the world from the doom of the wicked. And then, in closing, let me turn your eyes another way to a yet more awful display of Divine vengeance–even more awful, I say–than that which is to be perceived in Tophet, where lost souls are shut up.

WITH WHAT EMOTIONS OUGHT WE TO GAZE UPON THE TORMENTS OF UNGODLY AND IMPENITENT SOULS? Certainly it should always be with an humble submission to the Divine will. The assurance that God is just, even in the midst of His hot displeasure, must ever be cherished. The Judge of all the earth cannot but do right. Though He is terrible and dreadful in His anger, as a consuming fire, yet is He still our God forever and ever, full of goodness and full of Truth.

There is a deep-seated unbelief among Christians just now, about the eternity of future punishment. It is not outspoken–in many cases it is whispered–and it frequently assumes the shape of a spirit of benevolent desire that the doctrine may be disproved. I fear that at the bottom of all this there is a rebellion against the dread Sovereignty of God. There is a suspicion that sin is not, after all, so bad a thing as we have dreamed. There is an apology, or a lurking wish to apologize for sinners who are looked upon rather as objects of pity than as objects of indignation and really deserving the punishment which they have willfully brought upon themselves.

I am afraid it is the old nature in us putting on the specious garb of charity which thus leads us to discredit a fact which is as certain as the happiness of Believers. Shake the foundations upon which the eternity of Hell rests and you have shaken Heaven's eternity, too. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." There is precisely the same word in the

original. We have it translated a little more strongly in our version, but the word stands the same. And if the one is not eternal, the other is not!

Brethren, this is a fearful thing. Who can meditate upon the place appointed for the wicked without a shudder? Ungodly men seem to think we like to preach upon these topics. Far, far is it from being the case. I have had to censure myself of late for scarcely having preached at all upon them. They fancy that Christian men can look with complacency upon the torment of the lost, imagining themselves to be safe! They know not what they say. The very reverse of such a spirit is common among us.

We shudder so much at the thought of men being cast away forever and horror takes so strong a hold upon us that if we could doubt it, we would. And if we could disprove it altogether, we feel we should be glad. But we dare not attempt the task because we know that it were to impugn the sentence of the Almighty and provoke a quarrel against the Most High. Great Judge of all! You shall trample upon Your enemies in the day of Your wrath! Yet shall You be as glorious in that act as when You pardon sin and pass by transgression. Christian, look there and, as you look, rebel not, but say, “True and righteous are You, O God. Let Your name be honored evermore!”

Surely, too, another emotion, which a glance towards the dreary doom of the ungodly can never fail to prompt, is that of gratitude.

“And why am I not there? They gnaw their fire-tormented tongues in vain–and why am I not there? Did they sin? I have sinned. Did they curse God and die? I, too, have cursed God. And it was a marvel that I did not die.”–

“Oh, were it not for Grace Divine,

That late so dreadful had been mine.”

Some of you who were accustomed to frequent the ale house, whose voices were loud in the lascivious song, who polluted eventide with sin and spoiled the day with your ungodliness–thank God that you have been washed in the precious blood of Jesus–for as you read the list of the lascivious and so on, you are compelled to say, “Such were some of us. But we are washed, but we are sanctified, but we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

Let the depths of Hell constrain you to heights of gratitude. And let the wailing and the gnashing of teeth which come up from there appeal to your lips, your heart, your very bowels and all that is within you–for the music of thankfulness that you have escaped. Should there not also here be deep feelings of humility? Look to the hole of the pit where you were lifted and the rock where God has hewn you! What those sinners were, such were you!

There was nothing in you that would carry you to Heaven, but everything that would have carried you down to Hell. You are a brand plucked from the burning–you would have burned in that fire

as well as others! And can you lift up your head, man, and boast of yourself and say, “O God, I thank You that I am not as other men”? No, not if you are in your senses. But humbled and yet thankful, you will go your way with a subdued heart, looking upon others with pity and with love and anxiously desiring to pluck them, also, from the flames and guide their feet into the way of peace.

And there is another sensation which must go through every nerve–and the thought will sometimes blanch our cheeks with terror–lest we also should go there. I think a glance of the eye towards the smoke of Gehenna would always prompt a holy jealousy over one’s own heart and a diligent watchfulness of one’s own walk. What do you say to this, professor? You see the smoke going up forever–what if you should go there after all? Remember, it is one thing to profess to be a Christian and quite another thing to be truly converted. You may go to the gates of Heaven by profession–but there is a back door to Hell.

High professor, take care. If your wings are made of wax they will melt. And the higher they soar, the greater your fall will be. It will be a dreary day for any of us if we have to go from the pulpit to perdition, from the Lord’s Table to communion with devils and from drinking the cup in which we commemorate the sacrifice of Christ to the drinking of the cup of trembling–in which the dregs of God’s wrath are to be found. If I must perish, I would rather perish as an openly-avowed sinner than as a hypocrite–for the doom of a

man who has made a fair show in the flesh and a fine pretense of godliness must be increased by the loss which he suffers–the hopes which are disappointed–the professions which have turned out to be lies.

Members of this Church, I speak to you hoping that you will put the question among yourselves, "Is it I, Lord? Is it I?" My fellow laborers in this Church, deacons and elders, let us search ourselves! Let not your gray heads exempt you from the duty of self-examination. Let not your office screen you from the suspicion that, after all, you may be deceived. Come, let us go together as if we never went before to the Cross of Jesus! Let us look up to Him as He hangs bleeding there and if up to this moment we never have been saved, let us say, "Jesus, accept us now."–

"A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
On Your kind arm I fall–
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my All."

These at least are some of the feelings with which we, like Abraham, standing in the place where God has communed with us, may look towards Sodom and see the smoke going up as the smoke of a furnace. We shall pause awhile and then notice the teaching which seems to come from the dreadful doctrine of the wrath to come.

II. Look, Christian, if you can look and see there THE EVIL OF SIN. Are you startled? That is the true harvest of the sowing of iniquity. Come, Sinner, I charge you look at it. This is what sin brings forth–this is the full-grown child. You have dandled it on your knee. You have kissed and fondled it–see what it comes to. Hell is but sin full-grown, that is all. You played with that young lion–see how it ravishes and how it tears in pieces now that it has come to its strength. Did you not smile at the azure scales of the serpent? See its poison! See to what its stings have brought those who have never looked to the brazen serpent for healing!

Next time the enemy says to you, "Is it not a little one?" answer him, "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindles." Remind him that the mustard is the smallest among seeds but yet it grows to a great tree. Is it so? Do you account for sin as a peccadillo, a flaw scarcely to be noticed, a mere joke, a piece of fun? But see the tree which springs from it! There is no joke there–no fun in Hell. Fools make a mockery of sin, which is but an egg. But when the egg is hatched and the bird full-fledged, they will find that they must laugh on the other side of their mouths, if they laugh at all.

My God, from this day forward help me to see through the thin curtain which covers up sin and whenever Satan tells me that such-and-such a thing is for my pleasure, let me remember the pain of that penalty wrapped up in it! When he tells me that such a thing is for my profit, let me know that it can never profit me to gain the

whole world and lose my own soul! Let me feel it is no sport to sin, for only a madman would scatter firebrands and death and say it is sport.

You did not know that sin was so evil. Some of you will never know how evil it is till the sweetness of honey has lessly stricken with its sting. What? Is there no way to teach you the evil of sin but to cast you into Hell to learn the lesson? There you cannot profit but only perish by the knowledge acquired too late! O that you were wise, you thoughtless ones, and looking at the smoke of the ruin of others would learn how dreadful is that sin which will before long ruin you, as it has already ruined them!

Do you think that God struck Sodom and that He will not strike you? Drunkard, swearer, shall Gomorrah perish and shall you escape? No! He is the same God today to punish sin as He was then. I say see the blackness of your sin by the light of Hell's fire and as the smoke goes up forever, ask yourself will you sin when such is the inevitable result? Will you dwell with sin if this involves dwelling with tormenting fire? This doctrine I would to God we could learn in our hearts! It is hard for me to preach it! It is harder, still, for you to learn it! But none ever know the love of Christ till they know something of the evil of sin.

As the Christian, with downcast and blushing face looks to the place where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched, he is awe-struck with the justice of God. What? Is God so just as this?

He swears, “As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.” He is a God so good that He delights in mercy and never is His soul more glad than when He passes by transgression, iniquity and sin and receives His Ephraims to His bosom.

But is this God so severely just? Shall men, made in His own image, be broken by Him as with a rod of iron? Will He consign them to that Tophet, the pile where there is fire and much wood? Shall the ire of the Almighty be the flame that kindles it? Can He be a God of love and yet treat sinners thus? Then how awfully just must God be! How stern this attribute of unimpeachable justice! Some talk of God as though mercy were the sole quality of the Divine Character and He had no other attribute. But the God of Scripture is to be adored in every attribute by which He is revealed.

“God is Love.” But know, too, that His justice shall beam forth with ineffable splendor when He whets His glittering sword and says, “Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries and avenge Me of My enemies.” My God, when He came on Sinai, touched the mountains and they smoked! Coals of fire went before Him. He did ride upon the wings of the wind! Thick darkness was round about Him. His voice was thunder and He spoke in lightning. Even Moses did exceedingly fear and quake. What will He be when He comes to punish for offenses if He is thus dreadful when He comes merely to give the Law?

May you never know the weight of the eternal arm when it shall come down upon a guilty conscience. May we never feel in body and in soul how strict, how severe, how unflinching is that mighty God who has unsheathed His sword forever and bathed it in Heaven and made this as His solemn oath that He will by no means spare the guilty, but will cut them off root and branch and destroy them forever! Admire the justice of God. Muse upon it much. Think with what solemn pomp it shall be vindicated.

Oh, what a holocaust of victims shall burn forever in attestation of His majesty! Let your soul be humbled! Boast no more! Bow at His feet! Submit yourself to Him! "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

Another lesson now comes to us and one which I hope will be more pleasing and affect some minds that may not be moved by what we have, up to now, said. Looking at the destruction of the wicked, this reflection crosses our minds. We, His people, have been redeemed from destruction! What a price must that have been which redeemed us from such woe and rescued us from such a place of torment! You have learned from this pulpit the doctrine of Substitution, how the Lord Jesus Christ took the sins of His people and stood to suffer in their place. We do not say that Christ endured the Hell of His people–the precise torment which His people ought to have suffered–but we do say upon Scriptural warrant that Christ

endured a pain and agony which was tantamount and accepted by God as the proper substitution for all the griefs which were due to the sins of His people.

Who can form an idea of what the torment of one soul must be that is cast away forever? Not, remember, the torment of an hour, a day, a month, a year, a century, a thousand years, but forever–FOREVER! You cannot measure that. But you will have to multiply that by ten thousand times ten thousand when you remember that Jesus laid down His life for many and gave Himself a ransom for His sheep. Nor are these a few, but a great multitude which no man can number. Well did the Psalmist say, as he typified the Messiah, "All Your waves and Your billows are gone over Me." One soul that is lost cannot feel all the waves and billows, but Jehovah Jesus did!

None but a God could bear what He endured. Beneath that ocean of tremendous fire the mighty Substitute bowed His majestic head–that very head which Heaven worshipped and which is crowned with everlasting splendor–bowed himself in the great Baptism of almighty wrath that the waves of swelling grief might roll over it. Yes, every wave and every drop of every wave of Divine wrath that was due to His people! Think, think, Christian, as you hear that solemn trampling, as you hear the wailing of the lost, as your eyes seek to penetrate that land of death, as your whole soul is alarmed with gloomy forebodings of that wrath–think what must have been

in the tremendous cup–the Hells of all His people, not actually, but virtually condensed into the pangs of an hour!

He did but drink it and all His veins were flushed with hot blood. Every nerve became a high road for the hot chariots of pain to drive along. He cried, “If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” It was not possible! He set it to His lips. He drank, He drank right on. His back was scourged, but still He drank. His head was pierced with the crown of thorns, but He took not away His lips.

The spittle flowed down His cheeks. They were black with the bruising of mailed fists. Reproach had broken His heart and shame had covered His face–but on, still on He drank. They pierced His hands and His feet. They offered Him vinegar. They tore away His clothes. They stripped Him naked! They left Him without a comforter. Devils surrounded Him with mockery and men with scorn. But on, still on, He drank! O blessed Savior! Till at last He had swallowed every bitter drop–and turning the chalice upside down, not so much as one black drop trembled on its brim, for–

“At one tremendous draught of love,
He drained destruction dry.”

For every one of His people He exhausted the cup and there was not a pang, nor a grief, nor a penal groan left for any one of His elect. He suffered, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring them to God!

Here is a plummet to fathom the depths of the Savior's griefs. But who can throw the lead and who can tell when it strikes the bottom! God only knows the griefs of His dear Son. Even lost spirits can scarcely guess it. And oh, as you look into that smoke, ascending forever and ever, say, "Hallelujah, Jesus! For You have redeemed us unto God by Your blood and we shall reign with You forever and ever."

That fearful vision which beclouds my eyes and makes them feel heavy at the same time presses upon me with a tremendous weight while I mention another Truth of God. Behold here the solemnity of the Gospel ministry, the responsibility of those who listen to it and the need there is for earnestness in handling Divine things! Have I to deal with immortal souls? Then let me not trifle. Have I to talk with men who must spend eternity in Heaven or in Hell? Then wake up, sluggish flesh and bear not down my spirit! And you, my Soul, be stirred up to the highest degree of intensity of love, and of earnest devotedness that men may be, by some means, or by any means, brought to escape from the wrath to come!

I would to God I could preach as Baxter did! That man, the victim of many diseases, but sane and healthy in his mind, said he never came to his pulpit without tears and his knees knocking together, for he had to speak for God with men who must soon appear before His bar and he, himself, must appear there, too, to give an account of his preaching to them. O Sirs, it is perhaps but a matter of

amusement for some of you to come on a Sunday evening into this place, or any other. But believe us, it is no matter of amusement for us who have to preach to you!

We would not have accepted our office if it had not been thrust upon us! Woe is unto us if we preach not the Gospel! But if we do preach the Gospel, still terrors seize hold upon us, for our heart is ready to break when we think how the multitude reject that Gospel and go their way to their farms and their merchandise and will not come to the Gospelsupper to be fed. Preaching will seem dreadful work to the preacher when he comes to die if he has not been faithful. And it will not seem slight work to you when you come to die, if you have heard in vain! What would you give for another Sunday, for another invitation to hear those faithful sermons once more–to be moved by Divine love once more?

What would you give when inexorable death shall tell you that your hour-glass is empty, that your candle is burnt out and that your soul must speed its way to stand before God? My Brothers in the faith, with what earnestness should this alarm you! You are dealing, remember again, with souls that must sink to Hell unless they find mercy in Christ Jesus. It is said that when Michelangelo painted his celebrated picture of the resurrection, he went by permission to the graveyard and took out the newly-buried dead and piled up the corpses by his bedside. He then slept in the midst of them that he

might get his mind into something like a proper frame for picturing the horrors of that tremendous day.

I would not have you do such a thing as that. But living as you do in the midst of lost souls, I pray and beseech you to realize the prospect of their speedy perdition as a vivid fact. As you go to your bed, remember the despair and the dismay of those who dared to live in sin and have already died without hope. I think you will, then, be in a proper frame to paint that life-picture which I hope each and all of us have set our hearts upon–of the conversion of the souls of many by our means. Oh, we are not alive, we are half dead!

Whitfield could say, "When I think of these things, I wish I could stand upon the top of every hackney coach in London and preach to the passersby." We do not preach as if we meant it! I am afraid that we make Infidels by our lethargy and that you Christian people help to prevent the usefulness of the Word of God by the apparent indifference with which you treat eternal things. If Hell is a fiction, say so, and honestly play the Infidel. But if it is real and you believe it, wake up, you that so believe, and leave no stone unturned, no means untried by which through the power of the Holy Spirit sinners may be saved!

Pledge yourselves this night, as with your hands upon the horns of the altar! Pledge yourselves as you sit in the place where God has often met with you that from this hour you will seek, God

helping you, to love your neighbor as yourself and prove your love by pitying earnestness in seeking his salvation. That Truth seems to be written clearly enough in letters of fire in the midst of the smoke that comes up from the desolation of lost souls. And yet it is not merely preaching, important as that is. It is not merely warning our friends and our neighbors, though we should never lose an opportunity of telling them of their danger with more feeling than mere fidelity can inspire–yes, with that repeated earnestness which deep convictions from the very Word of the Lord and strong affection for the souls of men alone can prompt.

Let me entreat you–consider the use that Abraham made of that extraordinary Revelation, "Shall I hide from Abraham," said the Lord, "the things which I do?" "And shall I cease to use the precious opportunity of pleading for my neighbors?" appears to have been the old Patriarch's spontaneous thought. My poor brother! Ah, poor Lot! His wife! His daughters! The city with its inhabitants! A thousand thoughts of melting pity come rushing up at once. He does not stand mute with astonishment. He immediately opens his heart with intercessions and fills his mouth with arguments!

Oh Brothers and Sisters! That is just such a response to the secret of the Lord which He shows to His servants, as you should have always ready at hand. You need not wait for an opportunity! You have it now! Pray, pray, pray–pray without ceasing! Let the breath

of prayer be fervent with heat. Let the prayer be so eager that it repeats itself, as Abraham's did, each time waxing hotter, drawing nearer, growing more bold–till you verily tremble at the venture! "Who can tell?" This we know, we are in no danger of offending God by crying for mercy, even when we see the two-edged sword flaming from His mouth! You have no cause to lay limits upon your importunity or to check the rising passion of your vehement desire. Prayer is a fire that needs stirring. And intercession is a holy wrestling in which practice alone can make you adept.

Christians! Some of you may look at a doomed Sodom with other eyes than Abraham did. Lot is called a righteous man. And he was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. He frowned at the men of Sodom and expostulated with them and wished that sinners would restrain their follies and not go to quite such lengths in sin. That is the sort of man Lot was. Have I not many a Lot before me now? The father of the faithful went a great deal beyond this. He lived far away from the scenes of vice and the haunts of impiety. I suppose he did not think it necessary to sleep a night in that cage of uncleanness, that he might familiarize himself with the profane customs of the people.

He stood on hallowed ground, and prayed with a tender heart. He interceded with God! He multiplied his intercessions. Every time he prayed and with each fresh note of prayer his spirit grew more ardent. Impressed with God's severity, he takes courage from His

goodness. Here is a fitting example for us! It is an example which I know will not be lost on some of you. The courage that can rebuke man must come from the strength that takes hold upon God. When your face shines like an angel with the radiance that the Mercy Seat reflects upon it, then it shall come to pass that the scorner will not be able to resist the wisdom or the spirit by which you speak!

Oh how dreadful the jeopardy of the souls of unconverted men and women! Jonathan Edwards was once called upon to preach a sermon quite unexpectedly. I believe he had the habit of holding his manuscript close to his eyes, a most ungainly and apparently most inappropriate mode of uttering a discourse. He read it word for word. But as he read it, terror took hold upon his congregation! Weeping and sobbing were heard on every side, for the Holy Spirit was with him and each word came with power upon their souls.

I cannot speak such language as he used. But if I could, I might be the means of making some feel in what a state of jeopardy they now are. You stand over the mouth of Hell upon a single plank and that plank is rotten! You hang over the jaws of perdition by a solitary rope and the strands of that rope are snapping, one by one. Frailer than the spider's web is your life and yet that is the only thing which divides you from a world of despair! The slightest insect commissioned by God's Providence may end your unhappy life. You know not where, or when, or how disease may overtake

you. Death often floats in the atmosphere of the House of God. He may be looking through those stony eye sockets now!

The skeleton monarch may be looking at and marking you as his prey. Could Xerxes stand here tonight, could he have a little Christianity mingled with his philosophy, then doubtless the tears he wept as he saw his army and remembered that in fifty years all would be dead, were nothing to those he would weep as he remembered that thousands this day found within the walls of Churches and Chapels and tens of thousands who are not found in any sanctuary, within less time than that will not only be dead but damned!

Here is, indeed, subject for mourning, lamentation and woe. You stand upon the brink of that precipice and yet you play! You have heard the story of the monarch tyrant who invited one to a feast. When he came, the table was loaded with dainties and there was his chair on which he must sit, but just above him hung a sword suspended by a single hair. “Why do you not eat, Man? Is not the wine rich and rare? Fill your bowl and quaff it merrily.” But he looks up. “Why do you not help yourself to all those dainty cakes which make the table groan. Why, Man, what ails you?” He looks up. And right wise is he in looking up, for on that hair his life depends.

Would that you were as wise as he, for you will go your way and eat the fat and drink the sweet, but you forget that hair, that sword.

The sword of Damocles could only kill the body, but this sword will kill both soul and body and kill them both forever–and but a hair keeps it from you now.

III. I am weary with my picture. I am weary with looking into that thick darkness. Let me turn your eyes another way. Would you be saved? See yonder little hill outside Jerusalem's streets? God has become Man. He is bearing sin upon His shoulders. Here He comes all faint and weary with a ponderous beam upon His back. He struggles on. They remove the load a moment. But they force Him on with spears and goads and He, all willingly, leads the van. They come outside the city and while the sobbing daughters of Jerusalem stand looking on, they fling Him back upon the transverse piece of wood.

I see the rough executioners, each man taking hold of a hand or of a foot, holding the nail in his mouth a moment till he gets that blessed palm all ready and then with his hammer driving in the nails through the hands and feet of the Son of God! He is fastened to the wood. They roughly lift up the Cross. A place has been dug for it. They dash it down. That jar has dislocated all His bones. What pain He endures in that moment when He is lifted up between earth and Heaven! And now He has a long season of suffering before Him. They sit down. They mock Him. They point to His wounds, scoff at His prayers, gloat their eyes upon His miseries.

It is the Son of God suffering there. He shrieks “I thirst!” and they give Him vinegar to drink. He cries, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Heaven is black above His head. Fever comes on–His tongue cleaves to the roof of His mouth–that mouth becomes hot as an oven. Blood comes streaming down from all His pores. Why do I picture this? Why, here is your salvation! You must have an interest in the sufferings of that Man, or you must suffer for yourself forever. Would you not desire to have Him as your Substitute? Then remember, whoever believes in Him is not condemned!

Can you believe in Him now? To believe on Him is to trust Him. Will you trust yourself with Jesus? Now, if you do trust, your sins are forgiven! Your soul is accepted! Your eternal state is blessed and you are delivered from the wrath to come! Go your way at peace with God and at rest in your conscience and rejoice forevermore! May the Master bless even my feebleness tonight to your profit and may we meet in Heaven to His praise. Amen.

Ge 21:16 • Compassion for Souls

SERMON 0974

Compassion For Souls

"She went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot. For she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept."

Genesis 21:16

BRIEFLY let us rehearse the circumstances. The child Isaac was, according to God's Word, to be the heir of Abraham. Ishmael, the elder son of Abraham, by the bondwoman Hagar, resided at home with his father till he was about eighteen years of age. But when he began to mock and scoff at the younger child whom God had ordained to be the heir, it became necessary that he and his mother

should be sent away from Abraham's encampment. It might have seemed unkind and heartless to have sent them forth, but God, having arranged to provide for them, sent a Divine command which at once rendered their expulsion necessary, and certified its success.

We may rest assured that whatever God commands He will be quite certain to justify. He knew it would be no cruelty to Hagar or Ishmael to be driven into independence, and He gave a promise which secured them everything which they desired. "Also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a great nation." And again, "I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. Twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation." Had they both been able to go forth from Abraham's tent in faith they might have trod the desert with a joyous footstep, fully assured that He who bade them go, and He who promised that He would bless them, would be certain to provide all things necessary for them.

Early in the morning they were sent forth on their journey with as much provision as they could carry, and probably they intended to make their way to Egypt, from which Hagar had come. They may have lost their way. At any rate, they are spoken of as wandering. Their store of food became exhausted, the water in the skin bottle was all spent. Both of them felt the fatigue of the wilderness and the heat of the pitiless sand. They were both faint and weary, and

the younger utterly failed. As long as the mother could sustain the tottering, fainting footsteps of her boy, she did so.

When she could do so no longer, he swooned with weakness, and she laid him down beneath the slight shade of the desert tamarisk, that he might be as far as possible screened from the excessive heat of the sun. Looking into his face and seeing the pallor of coming death gathering upon it–knowing her inability to do anything whatever to revive him, or even to preserve his life–she could not bear to sit and gaze upon his face.

So she withdrew just far enough to still be able to watch with all a mother's care. She sat down in the brokenness of her spirit. Her tears gushed forth in torrents, and heartrending cries of agony startled the rocks around. It was necessary that the high spirit of the mother and her son should be broken down before they received prosperity–the mother had been, on a former occasion, graciously humbled by being placed in much the same condition. But she had probably relapsed into a haughty spirit and had encouraged her boy in his insolence to Sarah's son, and therefore she must be chastened yet again.

And it was equally necessary that the high-spirited lad should for a little time bear the yoke in his youth, and that he who would grow up to be the wild man, the father of the unconquerable Arab, should feel the power of God before he received the fulfillment of the promise given to him in answer to Abraham's prayer. If I read the

text aright, while the mother was thus weeping, the child, almost lost to all around, was nevertheless conscious enough of his own helpless condition, and sufficiently mindful of his father's God to cry in his soul to Heaven for help. And the Lord heard not so much the mother's weeping (for the feebleness of her faith, which ought to have been stronger in memory of a former deliverance, hindered her prayer), but the silent, unuttered prayers of the fainting lad went up into the ears of Elohim, and the angel of Elohim appeared, and pointed to the well.

The child received the needed draught of water, was soon restored, and in him and his posterity the promise of God received and continues to receive a large fulfillment. I am not about to speak upon that narrative except as it serves me with an illustration for the subject which I would now press upon you. Behold the compassion of a mother for her child expiring with thirst–and remember that such a compassion ought all Christians to feel towards souls that are perishing for lack of Christ, perishing eternally, perishing without hope of salvation. If the mother lifted up her voice and wept, so also should we.

And if the contemplation of her dying child was all too painful for her, so may the contemplation of the wrath to come, which is to pass upon every soul that dies impenitent, become too painful for us. But yet at the same time it should stimulate us to earnest prayer and ardent effort for the salvation of our fellow men. I shall speak,

this morning, upon compassion for souls, the reasons which justify it, the sight it dreads, the temptation it must fight against, the paths it should pursue, the encouragement it may receive.

COMPASSION FOR SOULS–THE REASONS WHICH JUSTIFY IT, NO, COMPEL IT. It scarcely needs that I do more than rehearse in bare outline the reasons why we should have tender compassion for the perishing sons of men. For first, observe the dreadful nature of the calamity which will overwhelm them. Calamities occurring to our fellow men naturally awaken in us a feeling of commiseration. But what calamity under Heaven can be equal to the ruin of a soul? What misery can be equal to that of a man cast away from God, and subject to His wrath world without end?

Today your hearts are moved as you hear the harrowing details of war. They have been dreadful, indeed. Houses burnt, happy families driven as vagabonds upon the face of the earth, domestic circles and quiet households broken up, men wounded, mangled, massacred by thousands, and starved. I was about to say, by millions. But the miseries of war, if they were confined to this world alone, are nothing compared with the enormous catastrophe of tens of thousands of spirits accursed by sin, and driven by Justice into the place where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched.

The edge of the sword grows blunt at last, the flame of war dies out for want of fuel, but, lo, I see before me a sword which is never quiet, a fire unquenchable! Alas, that the souls of men should fall beneath the infinite ire of Justice. All your hearts have been moved of late with the thought of famine, famine in a great city. The dogs of war, and this, the fiercest mastiff of them all, have laid hold upon the fair throat of the beautiful city which thought to sit as a lady forever and see no sorrow.

You are hastening with your gifts, if possible, to remove her urgent want and to avert her starvation. But what is a famine of bread compared with that famine of the soul which our Lord describes when He represents it as pleading in vain for a drop of water to cool its tongue tormented in the flame? To be without bread for the body is terrible, but to be without the bread of life eternal–none of us can tell the weight of horror which lies there! When Robert Hall, in one of the grand flights of his eloquence pictured the funeral of a lost soul, he made the sun to veil his light, and the moon her brightness. He covered the ocean with mourning and the heavens with sackcloth, and declared that if the whole fabric of nature could become animated and vocal, it would not be possible for her to utter a groan too deep, or a cry too piercing to express the magnitude and extent of the catastrophe.

Time is not long enough for the sore lamentation which should attend the obsequies of a lost soul. Eternity must be charged with

that boundless woe, and must utter it in weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Not the tongues of Prophets, nor of seraphs could set forth all the sorrow of what it is to be condemned from the mouth of Mercy, damned by the Savior who died to save, pronounced accursed by rejected Love. The evil is so immense that imagination finds no place, and understanding utterly fails.

Brethren, if our hearts do not yearn for men who are daily hastening towards destruction, are we men at all? I could abundantly justify compassion for perishing men, even on the ground of natural feelings. A mother who did not, like Hagar, weep for her dying child–call her not, "mother"–call her "monster." A man who passes through the scenes of misery which even this city presents in its more squalid quarters, and yet is never disturbed by them, I venture to say he is unworthy of the name of man. Even the common sorrows of our race may well suffuse our eyes with tears, but the eternal sorrow, the infinite lake of misery–he who grieves not for this, write him down a demon–though he wears the image and semblance of a man.

Do not think the less of this argument because I base it upon feelings common to all of woman born, for remember that Divine Grace does not destroy our manhood when it elevates it to a higher condition. In this instance what nature suggests Grace enforces. The more we become what we shall be, the more will compassion rule our hearts. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the pattern and

mirror of perfect manhood–what did He say concerning the sins and the woes of Jerusalem? He knew Jerusalem must perish. Did He bury His pity beneath the fact of the Divine decree, and steel His heart by the thought of the Sovereignty or the Justice that would be resplendent in the city's destruction?

No, not He! With eyes gushing like founts, He cried, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings! And you would not." If you would be like Jesus, you must be tender and very pitiful. You would be as unlike Him as possible if we could sit down in grim content, and, with a Stoic's philosophy, turn all the flesh within you into stone.

If it is natural, then, and above all, if it is natural to the higher grace-given nature, I beseech you, let your hearts be moved with pity! Do not endure to see the spiritual death of mankind! Be in agony as often as you contemplate the ruin of any soul of the seed of Adam. Brethren, the whole ruin and current, and tenor and spirit of the Gospel influences us to compassion. You are debtors, for what were you if compassion had not come to your rescue? Divine compassion, all undeserved and free, has redeemed you from your vain conversation.

Surely those who receive mercy should show mercy–those who owe all they have to the pity of God should not be pitiless to their Brethren. The Savior never for a moment tolerates the self-

righteous isolation which would make you despise the prodigal, and cavil at his restoration, much less the Cainite spirit which cries, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” No doctrine is rightly received by you if it freezes the genial current of your Christian compassion. You may know the truth of the doctrine, but you do not know the doctrine in the Truth of God if it makes you gaze on the wrath to come without emotions of pity for immortal souls.

You shall find everywhere throughout the Gospel that it rings of brotherly love, tender mercy, and weeping pity. If you have, indeed, received it in its power, the love of Christ will melt your spirit to compassion for those who are despising Christ, and sealing their own destruction. Let me beseech you to believe that it is necessary as well as justifiable that you should feel compassion for the sons of men. You all desire to glorify Christ by becoming soul-winners–I hope you do–and be it remembered that, other things being equal, he is the fittest in God’s hand to win souls who pities souls most.

I believe he preaches best who loves best, and in the Sunday school and in private life each soul-seeker shall have the blessing very much in proportion to his yearning for it. Paul becomes a savior of many because his heart’s desire and prayer to God was that they may be saved. If you can live without souls being converted, you shall live without their being converted. But if your soul breaks for the longing that it has towards Christ’s Glory and the conversion of the ungodly. If like her of old you say, “Give me

children, or I die," your insatiable hunger shall be satisfied–the craving of your spirit shall be gratified.

Oh, I would to God there should come upon us a Divine hunger which cannot stay itself except men yield themselves to Jesus! An intense, earnest, longing, panting desire that men should submit themselves to the Gospel of Jesus! This will teach you better than the best college training how to deal with human hearts. This will give the stammering tongue the ready word. The hot heart shall burn the cords which held fast the tongue. You shall become wise to win souls, even though you never exhibit the brilliance of eloquence or the force of logic. Men shall wonder at your power–the secret shall be hidden from them, the fact being that the Holy Spirit shall overshadow you, and your heart shall teach you wisdom, God teaching your heart.

Deep feeling on your part for others shall make others feel for themselves, and God shall bless you, and that right early. But I stand not here any longer to justify what I would far rather commend and personally feel–

"Did Christ over sinners weep,
And shall our cheeks be dry?
Let floods of consecrated grief
Stream forth from every eye."

Is God all love, and shall God's children be hard and cold? Shall Heaven be compassionate and shall not earth that has received His

mercy send back the echo of compassion? O God, make us imitators of You in Your pity towards erring men!

II. We shall pass on to notice THE SIGHT WHICH TRUE COMPASSION DREADS. Like Hagar, the compassionate spirit says, “Let me not see the death of the child,” or as some have read it, “How can I see the death of the child?” To contemplate a soul passing away without hope is too terrible a task! I do not wonder that ingenious persons have invented theories which aim at mitigating the terrors of the world to come to the impenitent.

It is natural they should do so, for the facts are so alarming as they are truthfully given us in God’s Word, that if we desire to preach comfortable doctrine and such as will quiet the consciences of idle professors, we must dilute the awful Truth of God. The Revelation of God concerning the doom of the wicked is so overwhelming as to make it penal, no, I was about to say damnable, to be indifferent and careless in the work of evangelizing the world. I do not wonder that this error in doctrine springs up just now when abounding callousness of heart needs an excuse for itself.

What better pillow for idle heads than the doctrine that the finally impenitent become extinct? The logical reasoning of the sinner is, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” And the professing Christian is not slow to feel an ease of heart from pressing responsibilities when he accepts so consolatory an opinion. Get rid

of this sleeping draught, I pray you, for in very deed the sharp stimulant of the Truth itself is abundantly necessary.

Even when thus bestirred to duty we are sluggish enough, and need not that these sweet but sleep-producing theories should operate upon us. For a moment, I beseech you, contemplate that which causes horror to every tender heart! Behold, I pray you, a lost soul –lost beyond all hope of restitution. Heaven's gates have shut upon the sanctified, and the myriads of the redeemed are there–but that soul is not among them, for it passed out of this world without having washed its robes in Jesus' blood. And therefore there are no harps of gold, no thrones of glory, no exultation with Christ–for that soul all the bliss of Heaven is forever excluded.

This punishment of loss were a heavy enough theme for contemplation. The old divines used to speak much of the poena damni, or the punishment of loss. There were enough in that phase of the future to make us mourn bitterly, as David did for Absalom. My child shut out of Heaven! My husband absent from the seats of the blessed! My sister, my brother not in Glory! When the Lord counts up His chosen, my dear companions outside the gates of pearl, outside the jeweled battlements of the New Jerusalem! O God, it is a heartbreaking sorrow to think of this!

But then comes the punishment added to the loss. What says the Savior? "Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched."

“These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” And yet again, “And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.” And yet again, “Into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” “Metaphors,” you say! It is true, but not meaningless metaphors. There is a meaning in each expression–and rest assured though man’s metaphors sometimes exaggerate, God’s never do.

His symbols everywhere are true. Never is there an exaggeration in the language of Inspiration. Extravagances of utterance? He uses them not! His figures are substantial Truth. Terrible as the Scriptural emblems of punishment are, they set forth matters of undoubted fact–which if a man could look upon this day–the sight might blanch his hair, and quench his eyes. If we could hear the wailings of the pit for a moment, we should earnestly entreat that we might never hear them again.

We have to thank God that we are not allowed to hear the dolorous cries of the lost, for if we did they would make our life bitter as gall. I cast a veil over that which I cannot paint. Like Hagar I cannot bear to look at the dread reality which it breaks my heart to think upon. How all this gathers intensity, when it comes to be our own child, our own friend! Hagar might, perhaps, have looked upon a dying child, but not upon her dying Ishmael. Can you bear now to think for a moment of the perdition of your own flesh and blood? Does not your spirit flinch and draw back with

horror instinctively at the idea of one of your own family being lost?

Yet, as a matter of stern fact, you know that some of them will be lost if they die as they are now living! At God's right hand they cannot stand unless they are made new creatures in Christ Jesus. You know it! Do not try to forget it. It will greatly add to your feeling of sorrow if you are forced to feel that the ruin of your child or of any other person may have been partly caused by your example. It must be a dreadful thing for a father to feel, "My boy learned to drink from me. My child heard the first blasphemous word from his father's lips."

Or Mother, if your dying daughter should say, "I was led into temptation by my mother's example." What a grief will this be! O parents converted late in life, you cannot undo the evil which you have already done. God has forgiven you, but the mischief worked in your children's characters is indelible, unless the Grace of God steps in. I want you to seek after that Grace with great earnestness. As you must confess that you have helped to train your child as a servant of sin, will you not long to see your evil work undone before it ends in your child's eternal destruction?

If we shall have to feel that the ruin of any of our friends or relations is partly occasioned by our own personal neglect of religion, it will cause us bitter pangs. If our example has been excellent and admirable in all respects, but that we have forgotten

the Lord and His Christ, it will have been none the less injurious to men's souls. I sometimes think that these examples are the very worst in their effect.

Immoral, ungodly men can hardly work the same measure of mischief as moral but unchristian men. I will tell you why. The ungodly quote the orderly life of the moralist as an argument that there can be goodness apart from Christianity, and this often helps men to rest satisfied apart from Christ Jesus. And what, O Moralist, though you never taught your child a vice, if you taught it unbelief, and if your example helped to harm its heart in bold rebellion against God? Ah, then, how will you blame yourself when you are converted, or curse yourself if both you and your child perish.

Dear Friends, it makes a terrible addition to the sight of a soul being lost if we have to feel we were under responsibility concerning it, and have been, in any measure, unfaithful. I cannot bear the idea of any of my congregation perishing, for in addition to the compassion I hope I feel, I am influenced by a further additional consideration, for I am set as a watchman to your souls. When any die, I ask myself, "Was I faithful? Did I speak all the Truth? And did I speak it from my very soul every time I preached?"

John Walsh, the famous Scotch preacher, was often out of bed in the coldest night, by the hours together, in supplication. And when someone wondered that he spent so many hours upon his knees, he

said, “Ah, man, I have three thousand souls to give account of in the Day of Judgment, and I do not know but what it is going very ill with some of them.” Alas, I have more than that to give account of, and well may I cry to God that I may not see you perish! O may it never be that you shall go from these pews to the lowest Hell.

You, too, my fellow Christian, have your own responsibilities, each one in your measure–your children, your school classes, your servants, yes, and your neighbors–for if you are not doing any good and do not assume any responsibility towards the regions in which you dwell, that responsibility rests upon you, none the less. You cannot live in a district without being responsible to God for doing something towards the bettering of the people among whom you reside. Can you endure it, then, that your neighbors should sink into Hell? Do not your hearts long for their salvation? Is it not an awful thing that a soul should perish with the Gospel so near?

If Ishmael had died, and the water had been within bow shot, and yet unseen till too late, it had been a dreadful reflection for the mother. Would she not have torn her hair with double sorrow? And yet many of you are being lost with the Gospel ringing in your ears. You are perishing while Christ is lifted up before you! You are dying in the camp through the serpent’s bite, though the bronze serpent is yonder before your eyes! And with many tears we cry to you, “Look unto Jesus Christ, and live!”

Ah, woe is me, woe is me, if you perish when salvation is brought so close home to you! Some of you are very near the kingdom of God. You are very anxious, very concerned, but you have not believed in Jesus. You have much that is good, but one thing you lack. Will you perish for lack of only one thing? A thousand pities will it be if you make shipwreck in the harbor's mouth and go to Hell from the gates of Heaven! We must add to all this the remembrance that it is not one soul which is lost, but tens of thousands are going down to the pit.

Mr. Beecher said in one of his sermons, "If there were a great bell hung high in Heaven which the angels swung every time a soul was lost, how constantly would its solemn toll be heard!" A soul lost! The thunder would not suffice to make a knell for a lost spirit. Each time the clock ticks a soul departs out of this world, perhaps oftener than that, and out of those who make the last journey, how few mount to the skies. What multitudes descend to endless woe! O Christians, pull up the sluices of your souls and let your hearts pour out themselves in rivers of compassion.

III. In the third place, I said I would speak upon COMPASSION FOR THE SOULS OF MEN–THE TEMPTATION IT MUST RESIST. We must not fall into the temptation to imitate the example of Hagar too closely. She put the child under the shrubs and turned her gaze away from the all too mournful spectacle. She

could not endure to look, but she sat where she could watch in despair.

There is a temptation with each one of us to try to forget that souls are being lost. I can go home to my house along respectable streets, and naturally should choose that way, for then I need not see the poverty of the lowest quarters of the city. But am I right if I try to forget that there are Bethnal Greens and Kent Streets, and such like abodes of poverty? The close courts, the cellars, the crowded garrets, the lodging houses–am I to forget that these exist? Surely the only way for a charitable mind to sleep comfortably in London is to forget how one half of the population lives.

But is it our object to live comfortably? Are we such brute beasts that comfort is all we care for? Like swine in their sty? No, Brethren, let us recall to our memories the sins of our great city–its sorrows and griefs, and let us remember also the sins and sorrows of the wide, wide world–and the tens of thousands of our race who are passing constantly into eternity. No, look at them! Do not close those eyes! Does the horror of the vision make your eyeballs ache? Then look until your heart aches, too, and your spirit breaks forth in vehement agony before the Lord.

Look down into Hell a moment! Open the door wide. Listen, and listen yet again. You say you cannot, it sickens your soul. Let it be sickened! And in its swooning let it fall back into the arms of Christ the Savior, and breathe out a cry that He would hasten to save men

from the wrath to come. Do not ignore, I pray you, what exists. It is a matter of fact that in this congregation many are going down to Hell–that in this city there are multitudes who are hastening as certainly to perdition as time is hastening to eternity.

It is no dream, no fiction of a fevered brain that there is a Hell. If you think so, then why dare you call yourselves Christians? Renounce your Bible, renounce your Baptism, renounce your profession if one spark of honesty remains in you. Call not yourselves Christians when you deny the teaching of your Master! Since assuredly there is a dreadful Hell, shut not your eyes to it! Put not the souls of your fellows away among the shrubs, and sit not down in supineness. Come and look, come and look, I say, till your hearts break at the sight! Hear the cries of dying men whose consciences are awakened too late.

Hear the groans of spirits who are feeling the sure consequences of sin, where sin's cure will never avail them. Let this stir you, my Brethren, to action–to action immediate and intense. You tell me I preach dreadful things. Yes, and they are wanted, they are wanted. Was there ever such a happy age as this? Were there ever such sleepy persons as ourselves? Take heed lest you take sad precedence of all others in the accusations of conscience, because knowing the Gospel, and enjoying it, you nevertheless use so little exertion in spreading it abroad among the human race. Let us shun the temptation which Hagar's example might suggest.

IV. I will now speak upon THE PATH WHICH TRUE COMPASSION WILL BE SURE TO FOLLOW. And what is that? First of all, true pity does all it can. Before Hagar sat down and wept, she had done her utmost for her boy. She had given him the last drop from the bottle. She had supported his tottering footsteps. She had sought out the place under the shrubs where he might be a little sheltered. She had laid him down gently with soothing words, and then, but not till then, she sat herself down.

Have we done all that it is possible for us to do for the unconverted around us? There are preventable causes of men's ruin. Some causes you and I cannot touch–but there are some we ought at once to remove. For instance, it is certain that many perish through ignorance. It ought never to be that a soul should perish of ignorance within a mile of where a Christian lives. I would even allot a wider area in regions where the people dwell not so thickly. It should at least be the resolve of each Christian, "Within this district where I live, so far as my ability goes, everybody shall know the Gospel by some means or other. If I cannot speak to each one, I will send something for him to read. It shall not be said that a man lost his way forever because he had no Bible. The Holy Spirit alone can lead men into the Truth, but it is our part to put the letter of the Word before all men's eyes."

Prejudice, too, is another preventable cause of unbelief. Some will not hear the Gospel, or listen to it, because of their notions of

its sternness, or of the moroseness of its professors. Such a prejudice may effectually close their hearts. Be it yours to remove it. Be kind to the ungodly. Be loving, be tender, be affable, be generous to them, so that you may remove all unnecessary antipathy to the Gospel of Jesus. Do them all the good you can for their bodies, that they may be the more likely to believe in your love towards their souls. Let it be said by each one here, "If a soul perishes, I, at least, will have done all in my power to reclaim it."

But what does compassion do next? Having done all it can, it sits down and weeps over its own feebleness. I have not the pathos wherewith to describe to you the mother sitting there and pouring out her tears, and lifting up her plaintive voice over her child. The voice of a broken heart cannot be described, it must be heard. But, ah, there is wonderful power with God in the strong crying and tears of His people! If you know how to weep before the Lord, He will yield to tears what He will not yield to anything besides.

O you Saints! Compassionate sinners–sigh and cry for them! Be able to say, as Whitfield could to his congregation, "Sirs, if you are lost, it is not for want of my weeping for you, for I pour out my soul day and night in petitions unto God that you may live." When Hagar's compassion had wailed itself out, she looked unto God, and God heard her. Take care that your prayers are abundant and continuous for those who are dying without hope. And then what

else does Hagar teach us? She stood there ready to do anything that was necessary after the Lord had interposed.

The angel opened her eyes–until then she was powerless, and sat and wept, and prayed. But when he pointed to the well, did she linger for a minute? Was she unprepared with the bottle to draw water? Did she delay to put it to her child's lips? Was she slack in the blessed task? Oh, no! With what eagerness did she spring to the well! With what speed did she fill the bottle! With what motherly joy did she hasten to her child and give him the saving draught!

And so I want every member here to stand ready to mark the faintest indication of Grace in any soul. Watch always for the beginning of their conversion. Be ready with the bottle of promise to carry a little comfort to their parched lips. Watch with a mother's earnestness! Watch for the opportunity of doing good to souls–yearn over them–so that when God shall work, you shall work with Him instantly, and Jesus shall not be hindered because of your carelessness and want of faith. This is the path which the true Christian should pursue. He is earnest for souls, and therefore he lays himself out for them.

If we did really know what souls are, and what it is for them to be cast away, those of us who have done very little or nothing would begin to work for Christ directly. It is said in old classic story that a certain king of Lydia had a son who had been dumb from his birth. But when Lydia was captured, a soldier was about to kill the king,

when the young man suddenly found a tongue, and cried out, “Soldier, would you kill the king?” He had never spoken a word before, but his astonishment and fear gave him speech.

And I think if you had been dumb to that moment, if you, indeed, saw your own children and neighbors going down into the pit, you would cry out, “Though I never spoke before I will speak now! Poor Souls, believe in Christ, and you shall be saved.” You do not know how such an utterance as that, however simple, might be blessed. A very little child once found herself in company with an old man of eighty–a fine old man who loved little children, and who took the child upon his knee to talk to it. The little one turning round to him said, “Sir, I got a grandpa just like you, and my grandpa loves Jesus Christ, do you?”

He said, “I was eighty-four years of age and had lived always among Christian people, but nobody ever thought it worth his while to say as much as that to me.” That little child was the instrument of the old man’s conversion! So have I heard the story–he knew he had not loved the Savior, and he began to seek Him. And in his old age he found salvation. If as much as that is possible to a child, it is possible to you. O dear Brothers and Sisters, if you love Jesus, burst the bonds of timidity, or they may become lethargic–snap all fetters! And from this day on, feel that you cannot bear to think of the ruin of a soul, and must seek its salvation if there is in earth or Heaven ways and means by which you can bring a blessing to it.

But I must close, and the last point shall be THE ENCOURAGEMENT WHICH TRUE COMPASSION FOR SOULS WILL ALWAYS RECEIVE. First take the case in hand. The mother compassionated, God compassionated, too. You pity, God pities. The motions of God's Spirit in the souls of His people are the footfalls of God's eternal purposes about to be fulfilled. It is always a hopeful sign for a man that another man prays for him. There is a difficulty in getting a man to Hell whom a child of God is drawing towards Heaven by his intercessions.

Satan is often defeated in his temptations by the intercession of the saints. Have hope, then, that your personal sense of compassion for souls is an indication that such souls God will bless. Ishmael, whom Hagar pitied, was a lad about whom promises had been made large and broad. He could not die. She had forgotten that, but God had not. No thirst could possibly destroy him, for God had said he would make of him a great nation. Let us hope that those for whom you and I are praying and laboring are in God's eternal purpose secured from Hell because the blood of Christ has bought them, and they must be the Lord's.

Our prayers are ensigns of the will of God. The Holy Spirit leads us to pray for those whom He intends effectually to call. Moreover, those we pray for–we may not know it–but there may be in their souls at this time a stirring of Divine life. Hagar did not know that her son was praying, but God did. The lad did not speak, but God

heard his heart cry. Children are often very reticent to their parents. Often and often have I talked with young lads about their souls, who have told me that they could not talk to their fathers upon such matters.

I know it was so with me. When I was under concern of soul the last persons I should have elected to speak to upon religion would have been my parents–not out of want of love to them, nor absence of love on their part. But so it was. A strange feeling of diffidence pervades a seeking soul, and drives it from its friends. Those whom you are praying for may be praying, too, and you do not know it. But the time of love will come when their secret yearnings will be revealed to your earnest endeavors.

The lad was preserved, after all. The well of waters was revealed, and the bottle put to his lips. It will be a great comfort to you to believe that God will hear importunate prayers. Your child will be saved! Your husband will be brought in yet, good Woman–only pray on! Your neighbor shall be brought to hear the Truth and be converted–only be earnest about it.

I do not know how to preach this morning. The tongue cannot readily speak when the heart feels too much. I pray that we may have a great revival of religion in our midst as a Church. My spirit longs and pants for it. I see a great engine of enormous strength, and a well-fashioned machine–the machine cannot work by itself–it

has no power in it. But if I could get the belt to unite the machine with the engine, what might be done!?

Behold, I see the Omnipotence of God, and the organization of this Church. O that I could get the belt to bind the two together! The belt is living faith. Do you possess it? Brethren, help me to pass it round the fly wheel, and oh, how God will work, and we will work through His power, and what glorious things shall be done for Christ! We must receive power from on High, and faith is the belt that shall convey that power to us. The Divine strength shall be manifest through our weakness. Cease not to pray! More than you ever have done, intercede for a blessing, and the Lord will bless us–He will bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him. Amen. PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON –Romans 10. And Genesis 21:1-21

Ge 21:19 • Eyes Opened

SERMON 1461

E*yes Opened*

"And God opened her eyes."

Genesis 21:19

THERE was a well of water close to Hagar, all the while, though she saw it not. God did not cleave the earth and cause new waters to gush forth, nor was there need. The well was already there, but for all practical purposes it might not have been there, for she could not see it. The water was gone in her bottle, her child was dying of thirst and she was ready to faint–and yet the cool spring was bubbling up hard by the spot! It was necessary that she should see the well, quite as necessary as that the well should be there and,

therefore, the Lord, in great compassion, led her to see it, or, as the text puts it, “God opened her eyes.”

This was a small matter compared with the creation of a new-form rain, but our God does very little things as well as very great things when there is need for them. The same God who divides the Red Sea and makes the Jordan to be dried up, opens a poor woman’s eyes. The same God who came with all His chariots of fire to Paran and with all His holy ones to Sinai and made the mountain utterly to smoke in His Presence, is He of whom we read, “and God opened Hagar’s eyes.” The Infinite Lord is at home in doing little things. He counts the stars, but He also numbers the hairs of our heads. Remember that the same God who molded the orb on which we dwell, also fashions every tiny dewdrop! And He who makes the lightning bolt to fly through the midst of Heaven, wings every butterfly and guides every minnow in the brook!

He prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah, but He also prepared a little worm to destroy the gourd. How condescending He is, since He carefully attends to minor matters for His children and not only kills for them the fatted calf, but puts shoes on their feet. Sometimes very little things become absolutely necessary, for they act as the hinges of history, the pivots upon which the future turns. How frequently the whole course of a man’s career has been affected by a moment’s thought. The word of a child has affected the destiny of an empire–the chance expression of a speaker–as

men talk of chance, has fired races with a new passion and changed times and shaken kingdoms.

The Lord works gloriously by agents and events small and despised. God, by opening Hagar's eyes, secured the existence of the Ishmaelite race, which even to this day remains–from the little comes the great. There may be persons present who need but very little to enable them to enter into eternal life–they need only that their eyes should be opened! May the Lord grant them that favor! O that He may now bid many a Hagar see His salvation! Why should the thirsty souls wait any longer? Everything is ready–they are on the borders of salvation–but they need that their eyes should be opened.

Our subject at this time shall be the opening of eyes, taking rather a wide range, because it is a wide subject, and hoping that both to those who see and to those who cannot see, there may come a gracious opening of the spiritual eye.

Our first head shall be that IF OUR EYES WERE FURTHER OPENED, THE RESULT TO ANY ONE OF US WOULD BE VERY REMARKABLE. We are at present limited in our range of sight. This is true of our natural or physical vision, of our mental vision and of our spiritual vision. And in each case, when the range of sight is enlarged, very remarkable discoveries are made. God has been pleased to open the natural eyes of mankind by the invention of optical instruments. What a discovery it was when, first of all,

certain pieces of glass were arranged in connection with each other and men began to peer into the stars!

What a change has come over the knowledge of our race by the invention of the telescope! How much of truly devout, adoring thought and of deep, intense, unutterable reverence has been born into the world by the Lord's having, in this sense, opened men's eyes! When he turned his telescope upon the nebulae and discovered that these were innumerable stars, what a hymn of praise must have burst from the reverent astronomer's heart! How infinite You are, most glorious Lord! What wonders have You created! Let Your name be had in reverence forever and ever!

Equally marvelous was the effect upon human knowledge when the microscope was invented. We could never have imagined what wonders of skill and of taste would be revealed by the magnifying glass and what marvels of beauty would be found compressed within a space too small to measure! Who dreamed that a butterfly wing would display art and wisdom and a delicacy never to be rivaled by human workmanship? The most delicate work of art is rough, crude, raw, compared with the most common object in Nature! The one is the production of man, the other the handiwork of God!

Spend an evening with the microscope and if your heart is right, you will lift your eye away from the glass to Heaven and exclaim, "Great God, You are as wonderful in the little as You are in the

great and as much to be praised for the minute as for the magnificent!" While we say, "Great are You, O God, for You made the great and wide sea and the leviathan whose lot it is to play there," we feel that we can also say, "Great are You, O Lord, for You made the drop of water and have filled it with innumerable living things."

Our physical eyes opened by either glass, reveal strange marvels and we may infer from this fact that the opening of our mental and spiritual eyes will discover to us equal wonders in other domains and thus increase our reverence and love towards God. Suppose, dear Brothers and Sisters, that our eyes could be opened as to all our past lives. We have seen them, for we have traveled through them. But it was very cloudy when I went that way–I do not know how it was with you. None of us have our eyes thoroughly opened yet–we have up to now been traveling through life as men who journey in a mist. Even the things which have come close to us and have most affected us, have been hidden, as it were, in that which is not light, but visible darkness.

And now, if we could look back upon the whole length of life–40, or 50, or 60, or 70 years with our eyes opened–how amazing it would look! Our childhood–how different that period would now appear with God's light upon it! Those early struggles for a livelihood–we thought them difficult–but we already begin to see what discipline there was in them and how necessary they were for

us. Those losses and crosses–why even with our present partial sight we can see how much they were for our good! Yet there remains in life some singular things which we cannot, as yet, explain.

Why was the favorite son taken away just when all our hopes were to have been fulfilled in him? Why was the husband struck down when the little children were so dependent? Why was the wife removed when a mother's care was most needed? Why fell that daughter sick so suddenly? Why were we, ourselves, balked in the moment of success? If our eyes could be opened so that we could see what would have been if things had gone differently, we would, all of us, thank God that our lives were ordered as they have been! Have you never heard of one who was grievously lamenting the death of his favorite son and, falling asleep, dreamed that he saw his boy alive, again, and that he beheld the life which that son would have led?

It was such a life that he wept in his dream and, waking, he blessed God that his son could never act according to what he had seen in vision–it was better that he should be dead. Repine no more, my sorrowing Friend, for that which you would have kept in your bosom might have turned into a viper! That which you thought a treasure might have burned in your heart like coals of fire! Providence has ordered all things wisely and if our eyes were opened, we would bow in adoring reverence and magnify the God

who has done all things well! Our vision will be strengthened one day so that we shall see the end from the beginning–and then we shall understand that the Lord makes all things work together for good to them that love Him.

And now suppose, again, our eyes should be opened upon the future. Yes, would you not like to spy into destiny? My curiosity is, probably, as great as yours, but still it is balanced by another faculty and I declare that if I could see into tomorrow I would refuse to look! There is a desire in man to know what lines are written for him in the book of fate–whether they shall be bright or dark. Ah, dear Friend, if your eyes could be opened as to all that is to happen, what would you do? If you were wise and knew your future, you would commit it unto God–commit it to Him though you do not know it! If you were wise you would wish to spend that future in His service if you knew it–spend it in His service though it is hidden from you!

If you knew what would happen, you would feel great need for faith–you do not know what will happen, but your need of faith is precisely the same! Trust in God, come what may! This thing is certain–that to live unsaved and unforgiven is a very dangerous condition! God help you to get out of it at once by flying to Jesus for present salvation and finding it on the spot! If you knew the future, it might make you idle, but it ought to make you diligent! If you knew the future, it might make you vain, but it should make

you humble! If you knew the future, it might make you despondent, but it should make you trust! At any rate, knowing nothing at all about it, obey the voice of the Holy Spirit who says, "Commit your ways unto the Lord: trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass: and He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noon-day."

If our eyes were opened, again, on another point, as to the existence of angels, we would see marvels! We will enter into no speculations but what a sight would be before us if suddenly we could behold all the creatures that are round about us! The Prophet of old prayed for a young man that his eyes might be opened and immediately he saw horses of fire and chariots of fire round about Elisha! So do angels encircle the people of God! "The angel of the Lord camps round about them that fear Him." "He shall give His angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways: they shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone." "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation?"

Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth, both when we sleep and when we wake and, if we were more like those pure spirits and more familiar with their Master, we should feel more gratitude to Him for setting them round about us. Fear not, you are not alone, O child of God! Your Father never calls off your bodyguard! The evil spirit comes to tempt you, but the Lord has set His sentinel angel to

keep watch that no ill may approach you. If the Lord opened the eyes of His greatly beloved servants to see how many of these mighty intelligences are silently guarding them, they would cease to complain of loneliness while in the midst of such a thronging ministry of willing friends!

And what, once more, if your eyes could be opened to look into Heaven? Where it is we do not know. It is not very far away. At any rate, the glorified know what we do here, for they rejoice over one sinner that repents! Evidently, too, it takes not long to travel there, for it was eventide when Jesus told the thief that he should be with Him in Paradise that very day and you may be sure he was there! Oh, that we could see the place of unveiled Glory and unmingled bliss as we shall see it in an instant when our Father's messenger, called Death, shall strike the scales from our eyes, or rather, remove these dim optics with which we blunderingly see and let our naked spirit gaze on the reality of things without these hindering eyes which do but inform us of their outward show!

Oh, what glories shall we see then! What splendor above the light of the sun! What music, sweeter than harpers harping with their harps! What glory! Solomon knew not the likes of this! There is the Light of all lights, the Delight of all delights, the Heaven of heavens, the Sun of our soul, our All in All–Jesus Christ, the Truth of God! What bliss to be with Him–with Him forever and ever! Break, eternal morning! Break even now! Would God that, at least

for once, till the day breaks and the shadows flee away, we had our eyes opened to see the Glories beyond–then this poor world would be despised by us–we would forget its pains and pleasures!

We would rise superior to all its influences and we would rise to be heavenly ourselves! Wait awhile, Brothers and Sisters. Wait for a very little while. Wait a "wee and dinna weary," as the Scottish woman said, and you shall see it all–

"Just when You will, O Bridegroom, say,
'Rise up, My love, and come away!'
Open to me Your golden gate
Just when You will, or soon or late."

So far, I have wandered from the text, but now, in my second head, I will come back to it.

II. IN SOME THINGS OUR EYES MUST BE OPENED. Those I have spoken about are desirable in a measure, but these are absolutely necessary. For instance, as to Divine salvation, our eyes must be opened. Hagar's case is a strange one. Picture it. She is thirsty and her boy is dying–her instincts are quickened by her love to her child and yet she cannot see a well of water. There it is! Close to her! Do you not see it? Just there! She cannot see it till her eyes are opened. It is as plain as a pikestaff, but she does not perceive it.

Now, this is a graphic representation of the position of many a seeking sinner. There is the way of salvation and, if there is

anything plain in the world, it is that road of life! The fact that two times two make four is no plainer than–"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." "Look unto the Son of God and live"–what can be more simple? And yet nobody did ever understand the doctrine of, "believe and live," till God opened his eyes! The well is there, but the thirsty soul cannot see it. Christ is there, but the sinner cannot see Him. There is the Fountain filled with blood, but he does not know how to wash in it.

There stand the words, "Believe and live"–simple words that need no explanation! They are legible by their own the darkened eyeballs of the sinner, he cannot and he will not perceive the self-evident Truth of God! Why this inability to see? I suppose Hagar's eyes were somewhat darkened by her grief. She was broken-hearted, poor woman and, therefore, her eyes were not so clear as usual.

So some souls have such grief for sin; such sorrow for having offended God; such fear of wrath to come that they cannot perceive the Truth of God which would comfort them. What ails you, poor Soul? What ails you? It is well that you grieve for sin, but Christ has come to put it away! It is well that you mourn your lost estate, but Christ has come to save you and there He is, right before you if you can but see Him! It was unbelief, too, that darkened Hagar's eyes. God had appeared to her years before, you remember, when she was in very much the same plight, and He had given her a

promise that He would make of her son that was to be born a great nation. She might have reflected that this could never happen unless the boy's life was preserved–and since he could not live without a drink of water she should have felt confident that water would be forthcoming.

She was unbelieving, but it is not ours to judge her for, alas, we are unbelieving, too! Anxious Soul, is that your case? Oh, if you could believe! Truly, you have good cause! It should not be hard to believe what God says, for He cannot lie! But, still, unbelief darkens many an eye. There are many who cannot see because of self-conceit. When great Self feasts his eyes upon his own good works or religious performances, of course he cannot see the way of salvation by Christ alone! The Lord take these scales from your eyes, poor Sinner, for Self is a great maker of darkness! Nothing more surely holds a soul in gloom than a conceit of its own powers. How I wish I could so put the Gospel as to win men from self! I preach the plan of salvation as plainly as ever I can. I use very homely metaphors. I have sometimes even employed what the more refined call vulgar expressions–I would be more vulgar, still, if I could thereby help a soul to see Christ!

I tell you Jesus is near to you and within your reach and that salvation is close at your feet! You have but to trust in the Lord Jesus Chris, and you shall be saved! But I know that, after all is said and done, if you ever see Christ, it will be because the Holy

Spirit opens your eyes. I cannot open them, nor any other mortal man! Since the world began it has not been known that any man has opened the eyes of one that was born blind. Oh, that the Lord would be pleased, now, to open the eyes of every sinner here to see salvation in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

III. I must leave that point and finish with one more. IN OUR PRESENT CASE IT IS VERY DESIRABLE THAT OUR EYES SHOULD BE OPENED. To many it is imperatively necessary at this very moment, for if not now recovered from their blindness they will die in their sins! In this great throng there are some to whom it is pre-eminently desirable that their eyes should be opened at once to see what the inevitable result of their present mode of life will be, for their blindness is the source of great peril to them. That young gentleman who is spending his money upon the race course and loose society–I should think he might see with half an eye what will come of his conduct! The devil never runs express trains to Hell–there is no need for them–for you can go there fast enough by racehorses!

The turf has furnished to many an express method of ruining their fortunes and their souls! Get into that line of things–and all it means and all the society that goes with it–and your future needs no prophet. Many young men do not think till it is too late to think. I wish I could put a cool hand upon that hot brow and stop that young man and make him stand still and consider. O that the Lord

would open his eyes! And that young woman who has begun to look (not much, as yet) on what is called gaiety. Ah, the Lord stop you, my Sister, and open your eyes before you go one step farther–for one step farther may be your ruin!

And that tradesman who has begun–no, he has not quite begun as yet–but he is thinking about a course of trade which will land him in something more shameful than bankruptcy. I pray the Lord to open his eyes that he may see matters in the true light. I see a man before me who is about to commit moral suicide. O for a gleam of light, just now, and a touch of that finger which can open blind eyes! I cannot particularize and go into every case, but I have upon me a strong impression that I am speaking to some young man whose future depends upon his prudent pausing and careful consideration before he puts his foot down again. One step more and you fall! I beseech you, stand still and hear what God would speak to you! Turn, turn from your sins and seek your Savior, now, and He will be found of you at once and there shall be a life honorable and bright before you to His Glory! But if you go one step farther in the way in which the tempter's charms, like siren music, would entice you, you are lost forever! God help you, therefore, to stop, and may it be said of you, "God opened his eyes."

Now, leaving all these themes of thought, I would remind you that we are about to gather at the Communion Table and there we

should sit with opened eyes. Those who love the Lord cannot endure to sit as blind men in His palace, but they long for all the sight which Grace can give them. First, we would have opened eyes that we may see Jesus to be very near us. Do not think of Him, just now, as if He were far away in Heaven. He is there in His glorious Personality, but His spiritual Presence is here, also. Did He not say, "Lo, I am with you always" and, "If I go away I will come again"? He abides with us by His Spirit forever! Come, let us sit while this sacramental feast is going on, and sing –

"Amidst us our Beloved stands,
And bids us view His pierced hands.
He points to His wounded feet and side,
Blest emblems of the Crucified.
If now with eyes defiled and dim,
We see the signs but see not Him,
Oh may His love the scales displace,
And bid us see Him face to face!
Our former transports we recount,
When with Him in the holy mount,
These cause our souls to thirst anew,
His marred but lovely face to view."

We desire that you may have your eyes opened to see what you are in Christ. You complain that you are black in yourselves–but you are most fair in Him! You lament that you are so wandering,

yes, but you are fixed in Him! You mourn that you are so weak–yet you are strong in Him! A good man went, the other day, to visit a poor child who was dying–a child whom the Lord had taught many things–and the dear little fellow, as he put out his wasted hand said, "So strong in Christ." He could hardly lift a finger and yet he knew that his weakness was clothed with power in Christ!

We are poor puny things, but we can do all things through Christ! We are poor foolish things, but we are wise in Christ. We are good-for-nothing things, but we are so precious in Christ, so dear to God in Christ as to be numbered with His jewels and known as the Lord's peculiar portion! We are sinful creatures in ourselves and yet we are perfect in Christ Jesus and complete in Him. These are strong expressions, but as they are Scriptural, they are assuredly true. How blessed we are in our Covenant Head! The Lord open our eyes to see this.

Lastly, dear Friends, may the Lord open your eyes to see what you will be in Him. Ah, what will you be in Christ? In a very little while we shall be with Him. Many of our members have gone home to Jesus and one very earnest Brother, very diligent in working for the Master–a young man of whom we expected much–has been swept away by the receding tide while bathing in the sea. He has gone to his rest, I doubt not. Older friends have also ascended to God just lately, rejoicing to enter into the joy of the Lord.

Between now and next month's Communion some of us will, probably, have departed to the Father. Let our eyes be opened to behold, by faith, the Glory soon to be revealed. It may almost make you laugh for joy to think of your head wearing a crown–that poor head of yours! These poor aching knees and weary feet–there will be no more toil for them! That poor scantily furnished room, hard fare, narrow means and weary labor will all be exchanged for mansions of rest, bread of bliss and new wine of delight! You know each pavement stone between here and your house, for you come so often to the Tabernacle–but you will be walking the streets of gold before long to the eternal Temple above! Instead of noisy streets you will traverse paths of rest amid the songs of seraphs and the Psalms of the redeemed and that, perhaps, within a month.

Yes, in less than it takes the moon to fill her horns you shall be where the Lord God and the Lamb are the eternal Light! Certain of us are nearer Heaven than we think. Let our hearts dance for joy at the bare thought of such speedy joy! Let us go on our way blessing and magnifying Him who has opened our eyes to see the Glory which He has prepared for them that love Him, which shall be ours before long. God bless you for Christ's sake. PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON–Genesis 21:1-21.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"–852, 785.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:TO MY FRIENDS IN ENGLAND,

Until yesterday the weather here has been so unsettled that it was not favorable to my complaint, but now I hope it has taken a turn for the better and will be more suitable for rheumatic joints. It has taken me six weeks to get rid of the disease and now I hope to spend the rest of my sojourn here in gathering strength. If it may please God to permit me to return in full vigor to my delightful work, I shall indeed rejoice! Till then be so good as to maintain by your prayers and liberality the good works over which I have so long presided, so that there may be no lack. College, Orphanage, Colportage and Evangelists are all work and must not be forgotten. May the Lord's own blessing rest on them all. Yours heartily, C. H. SPURGEON, Mentone, February 28, 1879

Ge 21:19 • A Welcome Discovery

SERMON 1123

A *Welcome Discovery*

"God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink."

Genesis 21:19

You know the story of Hagar–of her being sent out from Abraham's tent with her son Ishmael. It was necessary that they should be sent away from the child of promise. God, nevertheless, had designs of good towards Ishmael and his mother. Still He tried them. Whether we are saints or sinners, we shall meet with tribulation. Whether it is Sarah or Hagar, no life shall be without its affliction. To Hagar the affliction came in a very painful manner, for the little water that she had brought with her in her bottle was

spent. She must give her child drink, or it would die and then she, byand-by, must follow. She laid the boy down, giving him up in despair and began to weep what she thought would be her last flood of tears.

Still there was no real cause for her distress. She need not have thirsted. She was close by a well! In her grief she had failed to see it. The distraction of her spirit had made her look everywhere except the one place where she would have found exactly what she needed. God therefore spoke to her by an angel, and after having done that He opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water, which, I suppose, had always been there. When she saw it, she went at once to it, filled her bottle, gave her child a drink and all her sorrows were over. It seemed a very simple remedy for a very sad case. It is but an illustration of what is often happening in human life.

Men and women come into sore trouble, and yet, if they could see all around them they need not be in trouble. They actually come to death's door, in their own judgment, and yet there really is, if they understood all things, no cause for their distress. They will escape out of their present trial as soon as ever their eyes are opened, for they will see that God has made provision for their necessities, prepared comfort for their griefs and made such a way of escape from their fears that they need by no means give way to despair.

I desire to speak to persons who are in trouble. There are three things I shall bring before them. The first is that it often happens

with seeking persons and troubled persons, that, as in Hagar's case, the supply of their necessities is close at hand–the well is near. Secondly, it often happens that that supply is as much there as if it had been provided for them and for them only, as this well seemed to have been. And, thirdly, no great exertion is needed to procure from the supply already made by God all that we need. She filled her bottle with water–a joyful task to her–and she gave the lad drink.

It often happens that when we are in trouble and distress THE SUPPLY OF OUR NEED AND THE CONSOLATION FOR OUR SORROW ARE VERY NEAR AT HAND. There is a well close at our feet, if we could but see it. We miss it, perhaps, not because it is far away, but because our eyes are not open. There is no necessity for God to make a well–that has been done. What is necessary is that He should open our eyes that we may see what is already there. How true this often is in Providence with Christian people. We have known them to be in sore alarm at some approaching ill, or in the most fearful distress on account of some troublous circumstances which already surround them. They have said, "We don't know what we shall do tomorrow." They have inquired. "Who shall roll away the stone?"

They know not that God has already provided for tomorrow and has rolled the stone away. If they knew all, they would understand that their trial is purely imaginary. They are making it by their

unbelief. It has no other existence than that which their distrust of God gives to it. While they are inquiring, “Where shall I find a friend? Who will come to the rescue?” the friend is already in the house, or, perhaps, will never be needed at all. While they are saying, “How can I get out of this dilemma?” God has already solved it. The riddle has been answered, the enigma has been explained. They are troubled about an enemy whose head is already struck off–they are repining about a difficulty which has already been disentangled by the Divine hand.

We have known persons to be utterly surprised when God has delivered them. This proves that their faith was small. With calm trust there is quiet waiting. They might well have expected that He would do it. Among the surprises such persons have expressed has been this–that, after all, He should have delivered them by a means so simple. “How could it have happened,” they ask, “that I could not have thought of this? That I should actually have the blessing I crave hard by me, and yet not perceive it? That I should be thirsty and crying out to God, in hope that perhaps He will rend the heavens and send a shower of rain, and all the while there is the well bubbling up with fresh water?” We have only to look to find, and having found it, we have only to stoop down to take and drink for our refreshment!

Children of God–you that are troubled about Providence, pray God to help you to trust when you cannot trace your God. Ask Him

to give you, not what you wish for, but resignation to His wishes. Ask to have His will casting its shadow over your soul and let that shadow be your will from now on. O that we had learned, in whatever state we are, to be content, basing our confidence on this sure promise–He has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” This is the best foundation for contentment that will ever be found. Oh, for Grace to feel that if we cannot tell how God will deliver us, it is no business of ours to be able to tell! That if God knows, that is enough.

God has not set us to be the providers. He does not intend us to hold the helm and to pull the leading strings. ‘Tis ours to follow, not to lead. 'Tis ours to obey and not to prescribe for God. Your deliverance is near, O child of sorrow, or if it tarries for awhile, it shall be but the richer blessing when it comes. Ships that are long upon the sea are, perhaps, the more heavily freighted. And when they come to the port, they will bring home a double cargo of blessing. Those plants that come up quickly when they are sown in the ground last but for a little while. Perhaps the blessing that is so long in springing out of the soil of your expectancy will last you all your life. Therefore, if the vision tarries, wait for it with patience.

Though this is true of Providence, I prefer rather to deal with the matter of spiritual blessings. It often happens that souls are disturbed in spiritual matters about things that ought not to disturb them. For instance, a large proportion of spiritual distresses are

occasioned by a forgetfulness or an ignorance of the doctrines of the Bible. We have frequently met with young persons who have made the astounding discovery that their hearts are desperately wicked. They were converted some time ago and made a profession of their faith. They did, then, really repent of sin and they laid hold on Christ, but their experience was comparatively superficial.

After awhile the Holy Spirit was pleased to show them more of the hidden evils of their nature and to permit the fountains of the great deep of their original depravity to be broken up–and they have been in perfect consternation, as though some strange thing had happened to them, and they have said, "Where is the comfort for this?" Now, if they had known, at first, that our nature is hopelessly bad and that the Scripture describes it as such, they would not have been surprised when they discovered that Truth of God.

And had they understood that the work of the Spirit is not to improve our nature–that He never tried to do it and never intends to do it–but that He leaves the old nature to die, to see corruption, to be buried with Christ and gives us a new Nature which comes into conflict with the old nature. And causes an eternal war and strife within the Spirit–had they been acquainted with those Truths of God when they found sin breaking loose in them, and felt the conflict within, they would have said, "This is just what I was told would happen. This is the experience of the children of God. This

is what Paul speaks of in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and I am, after all, in the same way as the saints of God."

Forgetting this, they think there is no comfort for them in what seems to them to be the strangest of all human experiences, but which, indeed, is an experience common to the people of God! They are looking for the well of water when that very doctrine they have forgotten would furnish them with the refreshment they stand in need of. We meet with others whose trouble is about their perseverance. They believe they are the people of God, but they tremble lest they should fail to hold on and maintain the good profession. Their trials are so severe and they feel their own weakness to be so extreme, may they not one day slip with their feet to a foul and final fall and be utterly destroyed?

Ah, if they understood what I feel sure is the indisputable Truth of God, that "the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger!" they would not have been troubled about that question, provided they could answer the other one–are they righteous? Do they belong to those made righteous in Christ? "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." What a magnificent assurance of the safety of all the sheep of God! If I am but one of them, may I not feel a perfect confidence that Christ, who cannot lie, will make good His word?

There are, besides this, innumerable other promises to the same effect and oftentimes a man distressed about that, might be relieved of anxieties at once by the knowledge that it is a perfectly unscriptural apprehension that is agitating him. We are all too prone to judge by our feelings rather than to take counsel at the Fountainhead and rely on the oracle of Inspiration. I used to know an excellent Christian woman whose trouble was of a somewhat strange character, for she said she knew she loved the Savior. And I think all who knew her felt that she did. But though she knew she loved the Savior, she was afraid that the Savior did not love her! Nor was it easy to comfort her about that.

Now, truly, if she could have grasped the thought that, "We love Him because He first loved us," the snare would have been broken. Had she perceived that all that is in us must be first put into us if it is of any good. That the Grace of God prevents us (goes before us) that it is the root and origin of any good thing in us. That the everlasting and eternal love of God is the fountain out of which our love to God must flow–had she known that–she would not have been troubled on that head. I wonder, sometimes, how those friends who do not receive what is commonly called Calvinistic doctrine manage to be comforted.

I certainly never have any quarrel with those on the other side of the opinion, for if the tenets of Arminianism have any sweetness to them, I am delighted to hear that any have tasted it. I am always

glad that everything in the world should be eaten up and if anybody can find any food and comfort there, I am glad to hear it. I could not, and therefore I do not, envy them. I would not wish to deprive them of any comfort they could find there, as I have never been able to find any myself. If I believed that my own final perseverance rested with myself–if I thought that I might have a love to God that sprang up because of my own will rather than as a work of Grace–I do not know, but I might be driven to utter distraction.

Some persons need solid food and must have it, or their health would fail. So the firm belief that salvation is of Grace from first to last, and that where God begins a good work He will carry it on, is essential to my Christian existence and therefore I cannot give it up. Those who can do without it, let them, but as for me, I cannot. I have not any comfort left me if anyone shall prove that these things are not the Truths of Holy Scripture. They are the Truths of Scripture, however, and let any who are distressed remember them. May God open their eyes to see them and they need to be thirsty no more!

Sometimes, Beloved, Holy Scripture has its well near to the troubled heart, not so much in the form of doctrine, as in the form of promise. There was never a trouble yet in human experience among God's people, but what there was a promise to meet it. You have only to look long enough, and you shall find the counterfoil.

You shall discover that God has in His Book that which exactly meets your case. “Oh,” said Christian, in Bunyan’s Pilgrim, “what a thousand fools have I been to lie rotting in this stinking dungeon all these weeks when I have a key in my bosom which, I am persuaded, would fit the locks of all the doors in Doubting Castle. Come, good Brother, let us try it.” And so Christian plucked up courage and he found his key of promise, though it grated a little. And Bunyan says that one of the doors went, as he puts it in his old edition, “damnably hard.” He did not know how to put it strong enough until he used that word. Yet the key did open every single door and even the iron gate itself, the external gate of the castle, opened by the help of that key.

O, dear Hearts, some of you have laid, fretting and worrying yourselves about things which God has dealt with already in His own Word. You have said, “Would God He would do that!” And He has done it. You have asked Him to give you something and you have got it. I have used, sometimes, the simile of a man in the dark dying of hunger and yet he is shut up in the pantry. There is food all round him, if he could only put out his hand and take it. Did he know it to be there, and would he grasp it, there is just what he needs. I am persuaded, Beloved, if you search the Scriptures well, there is not one child of God here that need despair of finding that the Master has opened a well of promise for him.

At other times the well appears in the form neither of a doctrine nor of a promise, but in the shape of an experience of someone else. Perhaps nothing more effectually comforts, under the blessing of God, than the discovery that some undoubtedly good man has passed through the same state of heart in which we are found. When we see the footsteps of the flock, we hope that we are in the Shepherd's path. Now, if you are in deep trouble, may I invite you to read the 88 thPsalm? What a Psalm that is–that prayer of David's! Was ever man so cast out from God's sight and banished from all hope as he? Yet there was no brighter saint in the olden times than that renowned sufferer!

If you have deep castings down of spirit, I would invite you to consort with Job. Read that book through. See how terrible are some of his utterances, yet who shall doubt that Job was not only saved from his sins and redeemed from all adversity, but that he holds a name among the most illustrious of those who by faith have overcome the world? Turn, if you need other examples, to the sighs of king Hezekiah, or to the lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet. Surely there you shall find your own case in some chapter or another! And if it is a matter of inward contention, read the Epistle to the Romans, especially that part where Paul, in wondrous paradox, describes himself as doing that evil which he would not, and not doing that good which he would, and yet that which he did,

he did not allow–till he cries, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

You would find, my dear Christian Brother or Sister, that instead of your present pinch and trial being a strange thing, you are only suffering what God’s children have the most of them suffered. You imagine yourself to be sailing over unknown seas, when you are but following the ordinary track-way of the saints around that cape of storms which, when it is better known, will be to you a Cape of Good Hope. Be of good comfort! Be of good cheer, for the experience of others may refresh you, as well as the promises and the doctrines which abound in the Word of God. And, Beloved, sometimes it pleases the Holy Spirit to open a well of living waters for us in the Person, and work, and life, and sympathy, and love, of our Well-Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Full often when I have found myself depressed in spirit, I have challenged my soul, as it were, with this question–“Why are you cast down? Did not Jesus feel this?” And the depression has vanished. The thought that Christ has sympathy in this particular trial is an inexpressibly sweet one. When the Holy Spirit brings it home to the soul, we can bless the Savior’s name that He did not merely carry our sins, but that He carried our sorrows. That He was not merely a Substitute, which is the greatest of all consolations, but a Sympathizer, which is also inexpressibly delightful to us.

Jesus suffers with you, O child of God–suffers in you. You are a member of His body and therefore He endures in you.

You are making up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for His body's sake, which is the Church. There is so much of suffering allotted to the entire mystical body of Christ that there is some of it left behind as yet, and you will have your share of it. Be thankful when you have it, that it is a part of the suffering of the body of Christ. And, oh, to look into His face by faith, and to feel that He is not hard or pitiless, whatever others may be! To look into His face, when we are distressed by reason of the wrongs of others and the dishonor done to Christ's Church, and to feel that He knows it, notices it, and has sympathy with us in our sorrow over declining zeal, or over the worldliness of His people–why that nerves us with new strength! Does Jesus feel what we feel? Does He sympathize in it? Are we bearing it for His sake? Then we will welcome the trouble and be glad to bear it, that He may be honored thereby. Beloved, if you have forgotten your Lord–(and perhaps some of you may, during this week, have been forgetting Him–it is no unusual thing)–think of Him again and you shall find a well of water close to you.

Besides, once more, our sorrows often arise from our not observing the Holy Spirit. He is in us and He shall be with us forever. We are troubled about the little progress of the kingdom of God in the world, but if we believe in the Holy Spirit we shall soon

get our courage back again. There is no reason why the simplest sermon, preached in the humblest place, should not at any time be the commencement of a great revival. There is no reason known to us why the simple preaching of Jesus Christ, on any Sunday, should not prove to be the conversion of all the hearers, and, through the hearers, very speedily of an entire nation! We do not know as yet–we have none of us, probably, any notion of–the great power of the Spirit of God.

Some years ago there left this coast a convict vessel full of the lowest class of men that could be got together–convicts sent out for long periods of exile. On board that vessel was a surgeon superintendent who loved the Savior–who believed in the Gospel and prayed mightily. He called the convicts together, stated to them that he had an intense desire for the good of their souls–that he intended during the time of their voyage that such-and-such rules for their good should be observed–that he particularly wished that they should all learn to read that they might be able to read the Scriptures–that he should hold meetings each day–that he should pray for them individually. Within a very short time a few convicts were converted to God.

There came a storm in which a companion vessel containing two hundred men went to the bottom and this alarmed and aroused the consciences of the ungodly on board this vessel, made them more susceptible of impression and rendered the task of teaching them

the Gospel much more easy than it had been before. Of course the terror was transient and being but a natural shock, wore away. Still, in the meanwhile, the good man had availed himself of the opportunity. There suddenly broke out in that vessel a Divine work and all over it might have been heard, at almost any hour of the day or night, hardened men, criminals exiled from their country, crying out, “What must we do to be saved?” When they landed there was not one man or child out of all on board who did not profess to have found the Savior, for the Spirit of God had worked strangely among them.

They had become, before they reached the distant clime of their destination, instead of a nest of swearing beings, whose very talk was profanity and whose breath was blasphemy, a Church of the living God! Such results were produced by the power of God’s Spirit in answer to prayer. And if the Spirit of God were to come upon anyone here, be he who he might, a like transformation would be worked! Though he were the most abandoned character, though his infidelity might have entrenched itself, as he imagines, behind a thousand arguments, the Spirit of God would pull those down, convince him of sin, renew him and change his heart at once. Oh, would to God the Church could say, “I believe in the Holy Spirit,” for today she is like Hagar in the wilderness crying, and the angel says, “What ails you, Hagar?” And she says, “I need more ministers, more missionaries. I need more zeal, more earnestness.”

Good God, open her eyes, I pray You! Were her eyes opened she would see that in the possession of the Holy Spirit there is a well of water close to her hand and all she craves is there–more, indeed, than she craves–a great deal more than she yet knows that she needs. Oh, for faith in the eternal Spirit, and the griefs we feel for the Church of God would come to an end.

II. But I must pass on. I think I hear someone say, "I have no doubt, Sir, that God has provided a supply for necessities, but may I partake of that supply? May I participate in the provisions of Divine love?" I will answer you by saying, in the second place, that THIS SUPPLY IS FOR YOU. Need I remind you that there are passages of Scripture which lay the provisions of the Gospel singularly open? There are invitations in the Word which are not confined to any spiritual character. "The spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." If there are any invitations there, it is, "whoever will." Well, but you "will." O poor Soul, you would give your eyes to have Christ. You know you would! You, poor troubled seeking one, if you had a thousand worlds you would freely forfeit them, if you could but say, "I am pardoned. My sin is blotted out." What, then, hinders you? What keeps you back? "Whoever will, let him come," and you will–therefore come!

We are told to "preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Are you a "creature"? If

so, if you believe and are baptized you shall be saved. That is God's own Word to you. Prove that you are not a creature. Then I cannot speak to you. But if you are a creature, to you as a creature is that Gospel sent. "Ah," I hear some say, "I was reading the other day–

'All the fitness He requires
Is to feel your need of Him,'

but I don't feel my need as I ought, so I have not got the fitness." My dear Friend, do you ever like to be interrupted in the middle of a sentence? "Oh," you say, "no! That makes me say what I did not mean. Let me finish my sentence."

Well, then, let that good poet, Hart, finish his verse without your interrupting him. He says–

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requires
Is to feel your need of Him.
This He gives you!
'Tis the Spirits rising beam."

You never have any sense of your need of Christ unless He gives you that sense of need. That is as much His work as full assurance is. The first breath, the first pang that indicates life, is as much the Divine work as the songs of angels or perfect saints before the Throne of God. There is another passage that has often yielded

comfort to the downcast. “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” You are “laboring,” are you not? Why, you have been laboring self-righteously to make a righteousness of your own! Give up that laboring and come to Christ “heavy laden.” You are loaded, are you not? Loaded with troubles, loaded with sins, loaded with weaknesses, loaded with doubts.

Jesus says, “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Does not that describe you? The water is for you, then. You “labor.” You are “heavy laden.” You are “willing.” You are a “creature.” “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Not long ago I tried to show you that there could not be a case of sin and misery that could not slip in there. “Lost, lost.” Is that what you say of yourself? The Son of Man is come to seek and to save such! If we were to open tomorrow a free dining house, I believe it would be necessary to put up at the door, before long, some kind of prohibition to prevent everybody’s coming. We should have to draw a line somewhere. But I am quite certain that there is no poor man in London that was hungry who would refuse to go in if he saw no prohibition there.

He would say, “If there is no special invitation for me, yet I mean to go in and try it on till there is a special prohibition against me.” I am sure that is the way with most of us. If there were a distribution to be made of gold and silver, I think most of us would go and

begin to take some until there was a special order that we were not to have any. I wish that any sinner who is troubled about election, for instance, would wait till God tells him he is not elected, or, if he has any misgiving about whether he may come to Christ, he would wait till he finds a passage which tells him that he may not come. If he would find that, then there might be some cause for disquiet. Will you also find somewhere in this world a sinner that did try to come to Christ, yet Christ would not have him? If you have ever found one of the sort, bring him here, for we have been boasting here very loudly that none ever did come to Christ whom He cast away.

If you will find one who did come and to whom Christ said, "No, no! You are not one of those I died for, not one of those I chose"–if you will find us one of the sort, we shall be sorrowfully glad to see him–glad because we would be glad to know the truth, but very sorrowful to think that that should be the truth. No, we defy Satan to find one in Hell that cried to Christ for mercy and cast himself upon the Savior, and yet was rejected! All the demons of the Pit, if they search to all eternity, cannot find such an instance! There never was, there never shall be one!

Stand not back, then, you who are athirst. When you see the water, the living water, stand not back, but freely come and take! For whoever takes of it God will make him freely welcome and the

angels will rejoice concerning him. The water is for you–assuredly for you.

III. Now to our last point. IT IS AVAILABLE WITHOUT ANY EXTRAORDINARY EXERTION. Hagar went and filled her bottle with water and she gave her child a drink. No hydraulic inventions were required. No exceedingly difficult pumping, no mechanical contrivances to obtain the water when the spring was perceived. She did a very simple thing–she held her bottle in the water till it was full, poured it into the child's mouth–and the dilemma which had imperiled her life was over.

Now, the way by which we get a hold of Christ is faith. A great many questions are asked about what faith is and there are large books written about it. If you want to study the philosophy of faith till you are bewildered, read a book about faith. But if you really would know its latent power and its potent charm, put your trust in Christ now, and you have got all the faith that is needed, and that, too, in vital energy. There are some who hold that the intrinsic virtue lies in the personal appropriation, so they say that faith is to believe that Christ died for me. These same persons tell us, "He died for everybody, consequently he must have died for me."

I do not see anything of a saving character in that belief at all. That does not appear to me to be in any degree the faith of God's elect. Properly, faith is a belief of God–what God says and what God promises. Its practical outcome is a reliance upon the ipse

dixit of the Almighty. “Thus says the Lord” is the warrant of faith. What is it? It is trust and whoever trusts Christ is saved. I am leaning here now, all my weight, and if this rail gives way I must go down. I am leaning here. Well, now, that is like faith in Christ. Lean right on Him, lean on Him with all your weight. Lean hard. Have no other confidence, throw yourself on Him.

It is not faith to put one foot on Christ as the angel put one foot on the land, and then to put the other foot on our works as the angel put his other foot on the sea. To rest both feet on Christ–that is faith. It is to do as the slave said he did–he fell right down flat on the promise–“And den, massa,” he said, “when I am down there I can’t fall not no lower.” Nor you, if you are flat on the promise. God has said it–that is the Truth of God and I believe it. And I expect Him to fulfill it. This is the testimony that God has given concerning His Son–that we have everlasting life in Him and if we trust Him we are saved.

“But I cannot believe,” says one. “Cannot believe” what? Do you say you cannot believe God? No, but Man, when has God ever lied? Find me once when He has forfeited His Word. Find me once when He has broken His promise! If you say, “I cannot believe Him,” do you not see that in that incredulity of yours you have maligned God? You have blasphemed Him! You have made Him a liar! That is exactly what the Scripture says–“He that believes not has made God a liar.” “But it seems too good to be believed,” says

one, “that God, for Christ’s sake, forgives men simply on their trusting Christ.”

Yes, it is good. But then we have a good God, a great God. Can you not believe it when God says it? Do you feel in your heart, “Why I must believe it if God says it.” Then, Beloved, if you trust on Christ because God has said it, you have the faith which is the gift of God! The faith which is the work of the Holy Spirit! For this is the work of God, the greatest work that He does in us–that you believe in Jesus Christ whom He has sent. “It is so simple,” says one. Yes, and that is the reason why it is so difficult. If it were difficult, people would do it. But because it is so simple they won’t have it. It was a very hard thing for Naaman to go and wash in the Jordan. And why hard? Because it was so easy! If it had been a difficult thing it would not have been hard and he would have done it.

“If the Prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it?” But when he says, “Wash, and be clean,” oh, that is hard–and so it is here because we are proud–THAT is the hardness of it. It is hard to trust Christ because we are self-righteous! Because we need to have a finger in this, ourselves. But, oh, when the Spirit of God cuts us down to the ground, takes away all power, strength, merit, boasts and glorying, then it seems a blessed thing to have nothing to do but just to put the bottle in the water and let the blessed Water of Life go gurgling into it till it fills up to the brim!

I think I hear another person say, “Well, but surely there is repentance. We must repent if we would be saved.” Truly so, but I would put it rather thus–he that is saved always repents–repentance and faith go together–they are born at the same time. They will accompany every Christian as long as he is in this life, but take care that you do not make a mistake about what repentance is. There is a Law-work which some Believers feel–but that is not repentance–it is quite another thing over and above repentance. There are dark thoughts and horrid forebodings, but those are not repentance. They may or they may not be of advantage to the Christian after he has passed through them, but they are not repentance.

Repentance is simply the consciousness of sin and the loathing of sin. And if you have these–and they are the gift of God, always the gift of God–then do not chastise yourself because you have not all the dark feelings of all the good men that ever lived. Why should you need more midnight? You are dark enough, poor Soul, without fretting for more darkness! Better far that you pray for more light! You have already, I will take leave to say, the repentance you are sighing after, for I know you hate sin and you do loathe yourself to think you should be a sinner at all, and you would do anything to be rid of sin–to escape from it. Would not you be glad to suffer anything if you could be perfect? I know you would. Well, that is repentance–that is the sign of repentance within your soul.

“Well,” says one, “but we must pray, you know.” Yes, granted. Every saved soul prays. But look here, do you know what prayer is? Do you think that prayer consists in the attitude of the body, or the ordering of the speech, or the utterance of petitions for a quarter of an hour, as I may have done in the course of the present service? I grieve to say that I may have done all that custom required in that fashion and not have prayed at all! It is true prayer if you can only look up to God and sigh, or if your heart does but groan before Him. Do not think that it is necessary to use fine expressions. Far from it! “God be merciful to me a sinner” was the prayer that brought justification to the publican–and some of the best prayers that have ever reached God’s ears are the shortest prayers that ever escaped man’s lips.

Do not measure prayers by their length, I beseech you. God will help you to pray. Prayer is His gift. If you do cast yourself on Christ, sink or swim, throwing everything away, even your own prayers and your own repentance–if you do come and rest on what Christ is and what He has done, you cannot perish! Look not within yourself! There is nothing but blackness there. If you look within you, expect to despair. But look yonder to that Cross on Calvary. There is life in a look at Him! O, my dear Hearers, how I wish we all looked at Him this moment! I have no hope but what I find there in those dear wounds, and in that head bowed down with anguish–

“All my hope in You is stayed,

O Christ of God, made sin for me, my

Substitute and Ransom!”

And every eye that is now looking to that Christ, and every heart that is trusting in that Christ, has salvation. There is salvation in none other"There is none other name given under Heaven whereby you must be saved.“ There is life for a look at Him. God grant you Grace to look at Him.

“The Word is near you,” on your lip and in your heart. “If with your heart you do believe in the Lord Jesus, and with your mouth you do make confession of Him, you shall be saved.” Oh, that God would open the eyes of many a Hagar! Let her see that there is the water, that the water is free to her and that she has but to dip in her bottle and fill it to the full. I have used an illustration here before, but I cannot think of a better one. At the risk of repetition, I will give it to you again. It just illustrates the case of many persons here present.

I heard that a vessel, after having crossed the Atlantic, had arrived in the mouth of the great river Amazon without being aware that it was there. The water was all spent and they were ready to die of thirst. They sighted another vessel, and ran up the signal. And when the vessel came within hail of them she said, “What do you need?” The answer went back, “Water! We are dying for water.” And you may imagine their surprise when there came across the waves this sound–“Dip it up. You are in a fresh-water river.” They had nothing

to do but to throw the bucket overboard and get as much as ever they would.

So likewise there is many a sinner crying, “What must I do to be saved? Oh, what hard thing shall I bear? What sharp thing shall I feel? What expensive thing shall I give? What tedious work shall I do?” God’s answer is, “Throw the bucket of faith overboard, Man. It is all round you. It is near you. You are floating on a stream of mercy. You are in a shoreless river of Grace. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God. If you trust yourself with Jesus, your sins, which are many, are forgiven you.”

Go in peace, and God grant you Grace to give to Him the glory through all your remaining days. May God bless these wandering words of mine to the consolation of some of His mourners, and my heart shall give Him praise, and your hearts shall overflow with gratitude! Amen. PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON–Genesis 21.

Ge 21:19; Lu 24:31 • Eyes Opened

SERMON 0681

E*yes Opened*

"And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water."

Genesis 21:19

Through the Fall the spiritual taste of man became perverted so that he puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. He chooses the poison of Hell and loathes the bread of Heaven. He licks the dust of the serpent and rejects the food of angels. The spiritual hearing became grievously injured, for man naturally no longer hears God's Word but stops his ears at his Maker's voice. Let the Gospel minister charm ever so wisely, yet the unconverted soul, like the deaf adder, hears not the charmer's voice. The spiritual feeling by virtue of our depravity is fearfully deadened. That which would

once have filled the man with alarm and terror no longer excites emotion.

Even the spiritual smell with which man should discern between that which is pure and holy and that which is unsavory to the most High has become defiled. Now man's spiritual nostrils, while unrenewed, derive no enjoyment from the sweet savor which is in Christ Jesus but seeks after the putrid joys of sin. As with other senses so is it with man's sight. He is so spiritually blind that things most plain and clear he cannot and will not see. The understanding, which is the soul's eye, is covered with scales of ignorance and when these are removed by the finger of instruction, the visual orb is still so affected that it only sees men as trees walking.

Our condition is thus most terrible, but at the same time it affords ample room for a display of the splendors of Divine Grace. We are so naturally and entirely ruined, that if saved, the whole work must be of God, and the whole Glory must form the head of the Triune Jehovah. There must not only be a Christ lifted up of whom it can be said, "There is life in a look at the crucified One," but that very look, itself, must be given to us or else in vain should Christ hang upon the Cross!

Taking Hagar's case first, I shall address myself this morning to certain unconverted ones who are in a hopeful condition.

Taking Hagar's case as the model to work upon, we may see in her and in many like her a preparedness for mercy. In many

respects she was in a fit state to become an object of mercy's help. She had a strong sense of need. The water was spent in the bottle, she herself was ready to faint and her child lay at death's door. This sense of need was attended by vehement desires. It is a very hard thing to bring a sinner to long after Christ–so hard that if a sinner does really long and thirst after Jesus–the Spirit of God must have been secretly at work in his soul, begetting and fostering those desires.

When the invitation is given, "Ho, every one that thirsts," you can honestly say, "That means me." That precious Gospel invitation, "Whoever will, let him come," is evidently yours, for you will it eagerly and vehemently. The Searcher of all hearts knows that there is no objection in your heart either to be saved or to the way of being saved–no, rather you sometimes lift your hands to Heaven and say, "O God, would that I might say, 'Christ for me!' " You know that the water of life is desirable–you know more than that–you pine with an inward desire to drink of it. Your soul is now in such a state that if you do not find Jesus you never will be happy without Him. God has brought you into such a condition that you are like the magnetized needle which has been turned away from the pole by the finger of some passerby, and it cannot rest until it gets back to its place.

Your constant cry is, "Give me Christ! Give me Christ, or else I die!" This is hopeful, but let me remind you that it, alone, will not

save you. The discovery of a leak in a vessel may be preparatory to the pumping of the ship, and to the repair of the leak–but the discovery of the leak will not of itself keep the boat afloat. The fact that you have a fever is well for you to know, but to groan under that fever will not restore you to health. To desire after Christ is a very blessed symptom, but mere desires will not bring you to Heaven! You may be hungering and thirsting after Christ, but hungering and thirsting will not save you! You must have Christ! Your salvation does not lie in your hungering and thirsting, nor in your humbling, nor in your praying–salvation is in Him who died upon the Cross–and not anything in you.

Like Hagar you are humbled, and brought to despair. There was a time when you did not admit your need of a Savior. You found comfort enough in ceremonies, and in your own prayers, repentances, and so on. But now the water is spent in your bottle and you are sitting down with Hagar wringing your hands and weeping in despair–a blessed despair! God bring you all to it! Despair is next door to confidence in Christ! Rest assured, until we are empty Jesus will never fill us! Until we are stripped He will never clothe us! Until self is dead Christ will not live in us!

It is quite certain that in Hagar's case the will was right enough with reference to the water. It would have been preposterous, indeed, to say to Hagar, "If there is water are you willing to drink?" "Willing?" she would say, "look at my parched lips, hear my

dolorous cries, look at my poor panting, dying child! How can you ask a mother if she is willing to have water while her babe is perishing for thirst?" And so with you. If I were to propose to you the question, "Are you willing to be saved?" you might look me in the face and say, "Willing? Oh Sir, I have long passed beyond that stage! I am panting, groaning, thirsting, fainting, dying to find Christ! If He would come to me this morning I would not only open both the gates of my heart and say, 'Come in,' but the gates are opened now before He comes. And my soul is saying, 'Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might even come to His seat!' "

All this is hopeful, but I must again remind you that to will to be rich does not make a man rich, and that to will to be saved cannot in itself save you. Panting after health does not restore the sick man though it may set him upon using the means, and so he may be healed. And with you, your panting after salvation cannot save you–you must get beyond all this to the great Physician Himself.

In the second place, mercy was prepared for Hagar, and is prepared for those in a like state. There was water. She thought it was a wilderness without a drop for her to drink, but there was water. Troubled Conscience, there is pardon! You think it is all judgment, thunder and thunderbolts, curses and wrath, but it is not so. There is mercy! Jesus died. God is able justly to forgive sinners. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not

imputing their trespasses unto them. He is a God ready to pardon, ready to forgive! There is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared. There is water, there is mercy. What is more, there is mercy for you! There is not only that general mercy which we are bound to preach to every creature, but for many of you whom I have described I am persuaded that there is special mercy.

Your names are in His Book. He has chosen you from before the foundation of the world, though you do not know it. You shall be His–you ARE His! The hour is not far distant, when, washed in the fountain and made clean, you shall cast yourselves at the Savior's feet and be His captives in the bonds of love forever. There is mercy for you now if you trust Jesus!

The water was not created as a new thing to supply Hagar's thirst–it was there already. If she could have seen it she might have had it before, but she could not see it. There is mercy, there is mercy for you. All that is wanted is that you should see it, poor troubled Conscience, and if you could have seen it there would have been no necessity whatever that you should have been so long a time as you have been in despair, and doubt, and fear. The water was near to Hagar, and so is Christ near to you. The mercy of God is not a thing to be sought for up yonder among the stars, nor to be discovered in the depths–it is near you, it is even in your mouth and in your heart!

The Savior who walked along the streets of Jerusalem is in these aisles and in these pews–a God ready to forgive, waiting to be gracious. Do not think of my Master as though He had gone up to Heaven out of your reach and had left no mercy behind Him. Let Him tell you that He is as near in spirit now as He was to the disciples when He spoke to them at Emmaus. Oh that you could see Him! He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever." He is passing by! Cry to Him, you blind man, and you shall receive your sight! Call to Him, you deaf! Speak, even you whose lips are dumb–His ears can hear your soul's desires! He is near–only believe in His Presence and trust His Grace–and you shall see Him.

It is a notion abroad that the act of faith is very mysterious. Now faith, so far as it is an act of man, (and an act of man it most certainly is, as well as the gift of God, for "with the heart men believe"), is one of the simplest acts of the human intellect. To trust Jesus, to lean with the soul upon Him–just as with my body I am leaning on this rail–to make Him all my confidence and all my rest needs no learning, no previous education. It needs no straining or mental effort. It is such an action that the babe and the suckling may glorify God by it!

The faith of Sir Isaac Newton, with all his learning, is not a whit more saving or less simple than the faith of the child of three years old, if brought to rest on Christ alone. The moment the dying thief looked to the Crucified and said, "Lord remember me," he was as

saved as Paul, when he could say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course.” I am very anxious to be understood, and therefore I am trying to speak very simply, and to talk right home to those whom I am driving at.

My own case is to the point. I was for some few years, as a child, secretly seeking Jesus. If ever heart knew what the bitter anguish of sin was, I did. And when I came to understand the plan of salvation by the simple teaching of a plain, illiterate man, the next thought I had after joy that I was saved, was this–“What a fool I was not to trust Jesus Christ before!” I concluded that I never could have heard the Gospel, but I think I was mistaken. I think I must have heard the Gospel thousands of times, but did not understand it. I was like Hagar with my eyes closed. We are bound to tell you every Sunday that trusting Jesus Christ is the way of salvation, but after you have heard that 50,000 times, you really will not even understand what we mean by it till the Spirit of God reveals the secret.

But when you do but know it and trust in Jesus, simply as a child would trust his father’s word, you will say of yourself, “How could it be? I was thirsty with the water rippling at my feet! I was famishing and perishing for hunger, and the bread was on the table! I was fretting as though there were no entrance into Heaven, but there stood the door wide open right before me, if I could but have seen it!” “Trust Christ, and He must save you.” I will improve upon

it: “Trust Him, you are saved.” The moment you begin to live by faith in His dear Son, there is not a sin left in God’s book against you!

We pass on, then, in the third place, to notice that although Hagar was prepared and mercy was prepared, yet there was an impediment in the way for she could not see the water. There is also an impediment in your way. Hagar had a pair of bright beaming eyes, I will be bound to say, and yet she could not see the water. And men may have first-rate understandings, but not understand that simple thing–faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You do not suffer so much from lack of power to understand faith as from a kind of haze which hovers over your eyes to prevent their looking into the right place. You continue to imagine that there must be something very singular for us to feel in order to have eternal life.

Now this is all a mistake! Simple trust in Jesus has this difficulty in it–it is not difficult–and therefore the human mind refuses to believe that God can intend to save us by so simple a plan. What blindness is this! So foolish and so fatal! Is not this ignorance partly caused by legal terrors? Master Bunyan, who had a keen insight into spiritual experience, says that Christian was so troubled with the burden on his back that in running he did not look well enough to his steps. Therefore, being much tumbled up and down in his own mind, as he says, he also tumbled into the Slough of Despond.

You may have heard the thunder of God's Law so long that you cannot hear anything so soft and sweet as the invitation of the loving Jesus. "Come and welcome! Come and welcome!" is unheard because of the din of your sins.

The main reason I think why some do not attain early to peace is because they are looking for more than they will get and thus their eyes are dazzled with fancies. You who dare not take Christ because you are not a full-grown Christian, be content to be a babe first! Be satisfied to go through the seed state, and the blade state, and the ear state, and then you will get to be the full corn in the ear! Be content to begin with Christ and with Christ, alone. I verily believe some of you expect that you will experience a galvanic shock, or a superhuman delirium of horror. You have an idea that to be bornagain is something to make the flesh creep or the bones shiver–an indescribable sensation, quite out of the compass of human feeling.

Now believe, that to be born-again involves the ending of superstition and living by feeling, and brings you into the world of plain and simple truth where fools need not err. "Whoever believe in Him is not condemned." If you can understand that and claim it as your own, you are born-again. But though you should understand all human mysteries, if you are not born-again you could not truly understand that simplest of all teachings, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

Again, I am afraid some persons with the water at their feet do not drink it because of the bad directions that are given by ministers. When a minister closes up an address to the unconverted with this exhortation–"Now, my dear Friends, go home and pray," that is a very right exhortation–but it is given to the wrong people, and in the wrong place. I do not say to you this morning, I dare not say to you, as though it were the Gospel message, "Go home and pray." I hope you will pray! But there is another matter to come before prayer, namely, faith in Jesus!

When Christ told His disciples to go and preach the Gospel to every creature, He did not say to them, "He that prays shall be saved," though that would be true if he prayed aright. But Christ said, "he that believes shall be saved." Your present duty is not praying, but believing. You are to look to Jesus Christ upon the Cross just as the poor serpent-bitten Israelites looked to the bronze serpent and lived. Your praying will not do you a farthing's worth of good if you refuse to trust Jesus Christ. When you have trusted Jesus Christ prayer will become your breath, your native air–you will not be able to live without it! But prayer, if put in the place of a child-like trust in Jesus, becomes an antichrist.

It is not going to places of worship, or Bible reading which saves. I am not depreciating these duties but I am putting them in their proper position. It is depending upon the Lord Jesus Christ alone which is the true vital act by which the soul is quickened into

spiritual life. If you, trusting in Christ, do not find peace and pardon, the Gospel which I preach is a lie and I will renounce it! But then the Bible would be false, also, for it is from that Book my message comes. This is the Gospel which we have received and which Christ has sent us to preach–that whoever believes in Him is not condemned.

Now why do you hurry about after this and that? Why follow this man's and that man's directions? Why look to your baptism and confirmation? Why do you go about to your Church-goings and your Chapel-goings, your Biblereadings and your praying, your good works about this and about the other–they are all but dross and dung if you put them in the place of Christ! But Christ Jesus, if you rest on Him, is precious, and after your receive Him, your works and your prayers shall become precious, too, because they will be performed through faith in Him. But until you come to Him, they are all nothing and vanity–unacceptable in the sight of God–because you put them into the place which should be occupied by the Savior.

I feel certain that there are some here upon whom the Lord intends to work this morning–so we will speak, in the fourth place, upon the Divine removal of the impediment. Hagar's blindness was removed by God. No one else could have removed it. God must open a man's eyes to understand practically what belief in Jesus Christ is. That simple Truth of God–salvation by trust in Jesus

Christ–still remains a point too hard to be seen. Until the whole power of Omnipotence is made to bear upon the intellect man does not really comprehend it!

But while this was Divinely removed, it was removed instrumentally. An angel spoke out of Heaven to Hagar. It matters little whether it is an angel or a man–it is the Word of God which removes the difficulty. Dear Friend, I pray that the Word of God may remove your unbelief. May you see today the light of Jesus Christ by simply trusting Him! I believe there are some who are saved who still are afraid they will be lost. I have heard of a butcher who, at his work, was accustomed to put his candle in a little candlestick which was tied by a belt around his forehead. One day he needed his candle in his hand and he looked all around his slaughterhouse for it by the light of the candle on his forehead. He looked about everywhere to fine it and, of course, he could not have looked at all if he had not had the light which he looked for already! Many a man is looking within himself to see the evidence of Divine Grace when his anxiety and the very light by which he looks ought to be sufficient evidence. I hope there are many of you who are just on the verge of salvation without knowing it.

I looked last Friday night at a very remarkable sight–the burning of a huge rug factory. I was returning home from my Master's work, when I saw a little blaze, and in an incredibly short time a volume of fire rolled up in great masses to the skies! Why did it

blaze so suddenly? Why, because for months before many men had been busily employed in hanging up the rugs and saturating the building in combustible materials. I do not mean with the intention of starting a fire, but in the ordinary course of their work. And in due time, when the first spark came it immediately grew into a great sheet of flames.

So, sometimes, when the Gospel is faithfully preached, a sinner gets present peace and pardon and he is so full of joy that his friends cannot make him out, his progress is so rapid. But remember that God has been mysteriously at work months before in that man's heart–preparing his soul to catch the heavenly flame so that there was only a spark needed and then up rolled the flames to Heaven! Oh that I could be that spark to some heart in whom God has been working this morning–by HE alone can make me so! I noticed when that factory was on fire from top to bottom that it seemed to glow like pure gold, or like transparent glass, and then I expected to see it fall and, by-and-by, fall it did, for after about half-an-hour, all of a sudden, one timber went over and the whole mass fell with a tremendous crash!

I venture to compare that final crash with the actual salvation of a soul long prepared, by God's Grace, to receive it. The heart has been glowing with a Divine desire, a heavenly flame for even months and years, and then, at last, and in a moment, the final movement is made–and doubts and fears and sins fall to the

ground–and there is room to build a Temple for the living God. May it be so with you this morning!

There has been much preparatory work in you, for you are brought to long after a Savior and you are desirous to be saved by Him. There He is! Take Him! Take Him! The cup of water is put before you. Drink it! No need to wash your mouth first, or to change your garments. Drink it at once! Come to Jesus as you are!–

"Come and welcome, sinner, come!"

II. Oh that the Spirit of God would give me power from on high while I try to talk to the saints from the second case–that of the disciples in Luke 24:31. This is no Hagar, but "Cleopas and another disciples." And yet these two suffered under the same spiritual blindness as Hagar, though not, of course, in the same phase of it. Carefully observe the case of these disciples, for I believe it is often our own. They ought to have known Jesus for these reasons. They were acquainted with Him. They had been with Him for years in public and in private. They had heard His voice so often that they ought to have remembered its tones. They had gazed upon that marred face so frequently that they ought to have distinguished its features. They had been admitted into His privacy and they ought to have known His habits. That Savior walking there ought not to have been incognito to them though He was to the rest of men.

So it is with us. Perhaps you have not found Jesus Christ lately. You have been to His table and you have not met Him there. You

are in a dark trouble this morning, and though He says, “It is I, be not afraid,” yet you cannot see Him there. Brothers and Sisters, we ought to know Christ! We ought to discover Him at once. We know His voice. We have heard Him say, “Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away.” We have looked into His face. We have understood the mystery of His grief. We have leaned our head upon His bosom. Some of you have had an experience of fifteen or twenty years, some of forty or fifty years–and yet, though Christ is near, you do not know Him this morning–and you are saying, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!”

They ought to have known Him because He was close to them. He was walking with them along the same road. He was not up on a mountain at a distance. Even then they ought to have known Him–but He was there in the same way with them! And at this hour Jesus is very near to us, sympathizing with all our griefs.

“In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows has His part.”

He bears and endures with us still, though now exalted in Glory’s Throne in Heaven. If He is here, we ought to know Him. If He is close to His people every day and in all their affliction is afflicted, we ought to perceive Him. Oh, what poor vision is this, that Christ should be near, our own well-beloved Redeemer, and yet we should not be able to detect His Presence!

They ought to have seen Him because they had the Scriptures to reflect His Image, and yet how possible it is for us to open that precious Book and turn over page after page of it and not see Christ. They talked concerning Christ from Moses to the end of the Prophets, and yet they did not see Jesus. Dear Child of God, are you in that state? He feeds among the lilies of the Word and you are among those lilies, and yet you do not see Him? He is accustomed to walk through the glades of Scripture and to commune with His people, as the Father did with Adam in the cool of the day, and yet you are in the garden of Scripture but cannot see your Lord though He is there and is never absent?

What is more, these disciples ought to have seen Jesus, for they had the Scriptures opened to them. They not only heard the Word, but they understood it. I am sure they understood it, for their hearts burned within them while He spoke with them by the way. I have known what it is, and so have you, to feel our hearts burn when we have been thinking of the precious Truth of God, and yet we have said, “Oh that I could get at Him!” You have heard of election, and you have wondered to yourself whether you should ever see again the face of God’s first elect One. You have heard of the Atonement, and the mournful story of the Cross has ravished you. You have gone from page to page of Scripture doctrine and have received it and felt its influence, and yet that best of all enjoyments,

communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, you have not comfortably possessed.

There was another reason why the disciples ought to have seen Him, namely that they had received testimonies from others about Him. “But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yes, and certain women of our company, which were early at the sepulcher, made us astonished. For when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive.” There He was close to them. Oh, it is so strange that in the ordinances of God’s house Jesus should be there, and yet in sad intervals our hearts should get so cold and so worldly that we cannot see Him!

It is a blessed thing to want to see Him, but oh, it is better still to see Him. To those who seek Him He is sweet. But to those who find Him, He is dear beyond expression! In the Prayer Meeting you have heard some say, “If ever I loved You, my Jesus, ‘tis now,” and your hearts burned within you as they thus spoke, and yet you could not say the same yourself. You have been up in the sick-chamber, and you have heard the dying saint sing–

“I will love You in life, I will love You in death,
And praise You as long as You lend me breath;
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, ‘tis now.”

You have envied that dying saint because you could not just then feel the same confident love.

Well this is strange, passing strange–it is amazing–a present Savior, present with His own disciples who have long known Him and who long to see Him–and yet their eyes are shut so that they cannot discover Him. Why do we not see Him? I think it must be ascribed in our case to the same as in theirs, namely, our unbelief. They evidently did not expect to see Him, and therefore they did not discover Him. Brethren, to a great extent in spiritual things we shall get what we expect. The ordinary preacher of the Gospel does not expect to see present conversions and he does not! But there are certain Brethren I have known who have preached with the full faith that God would convert souls and souls have been converted!

Some saints do not expect to see Christ. They read the life of Madame Guyon and her soul-enchanting hymns, and they say, "Ah, this was a blessed woman." They take down the letters of Samuel Rutherford, and when they read them through, they say, "Enchanting epistles! A strange, marvelously good man was this." It does not enter into their heads that they may be as Madam Guyon and that they may have as much nearness to Christ, and as much enjoyment as Samuel Rutherford! We have got into the habit of thinking the saints gone by stand up in elevated niches for us to stare at them with solemn awe, and fancy that we can never attain to their elevation.

Brothers and Sisters, they are elevated, certainly, but they beckon us to follow them, and point to a something beyond! They invite us to outstrip them, to get greater nearness to Christ, a clearer sense of His love, and a more ravishing enjoyment of His Presence. You do not expect to see Christ, and therefore you do not see Him. Not because He is not there to be seen–but because your eyes are shut through your unbelief! I do not know any reason why we should not be full of joy this morning–every believing soul among us.

Why hang those harps on the willows, Beloved? You have a trial, you say. Yes, but Jesus is in it! He says, "When you pass through the rivers, I will be with you, the floods shall not overflow you." Why not rejoice then, since the dear Shepherd is with you? What matters it though there are clouds? They are full of rain when He is there, and they shall empty themselves upon the earth. Up, my Brothers and Sisters, up! With everything that may discourage and cast you down, you have 10 times as much to encourage and life you up! He love you and gave Himself for you. His blood has cleansed you. His righteousness has clothed you. His Grace has decked you with jewels. This world and the world to come are yours–and Christ who is better than both worlds–is yours forever and ever! Take down those harps and strike the strings with glad fingers–and wake them into melodies of joy!

Now, dear Friends, I am sure it is the duty of every Christian, as well as his privilege, to walk in the conscious enjoyment of the

love of the Lord Jesus Christ. It may be that you came here on purpose that you might begin such a walk. The disciples had walked a long way without knowing Christ, but when they sat at His table it was the breaking of bread that broke the evil charm, and they saw Jesus clearly at once. Do not neglect that precious ordinance of the breaking of bread! There is much more in it than some suppose. Sometimes when the preaching of the Word affords no joy, the breaking of bread might–and when reading the Word does not yield consolation–a resort to the Lord's Table might be the means of comfort.

It may even happen that some other neglected means may be that which God intends to bless to your soul. I am afraid many of God's servants are in darkness because they have neglected known duties. The windows of Christ's palace are many, and He would not have one of them blocked up. And if you block up one window, it may be that He will say, "I will never show My face at any but that. I will make My servants take down that shutter, that the Light of God may shine through." There is nothing in any ordinance of itself, but there may be much sin in your neglecting it. There is nothing, for instance, in the ordinance of Believers' Baptism, and yet, knowing it to be a prescribed duty in God's Word, it may be that the Lord will never give you a comfortable sense of His Presence till you yield to your conscience in that matter. But, waiving all that point, what you want is to see Him! Faith alone can

bring you to see Him. Make it your prayer this morning, “Lord, open my eyes that I may see my Savior present with me. And after once seeing Him may I never let Him go. From this day forth may I begin, like Enoch, to walk with You, and may I continue walking with You till I die, that I may then dwell with You forever.”

I find it very easy to get near to God compared with what it is to keep near. Enoch walked with God 400 years! What a long walk that was! What a splendid journey through life! Why should you not begin, dear Christian Brothers and Sisters, today, if you have not begun, and walk with God through the few years which remain? What if God should spare you for 40 years? I do not see that there is any necessity that your communion with God should be broken from now till death or the Lord’s coming. “Yes,” you say, “you talk in a Utopian fashion!” Perhaps I do, but I believe that high-toned Christian experience is, to a great extent, what common Christians think to be out of their reach.

Oh to get up above yon mists which dim the valley! Oh to climb the mountain’s top which laughs in the sunlight! Oh to get away from the heavy atmosphere of worldliness and doubt, of fear, of care, of fretfulness–to soar away from the worldlings who are always earth-hunting, digging into its mines and prying after its treasures–and to get up there where God dwells in the innermost circle of heavenly seclusion–to get where none can live but men who have been quickened from among the dead! Where none can

walk but men who are crucified with Christ, and who live only in Him! Oh to get up there where no more question concerning our security can molest us! Where no carking care can disturb because all is cast upon the Lord and rests wholly with Him! Oh to live in such an entireness of confidence and child-like faith that we will have nothing to do with anything except with serving Him and showing forth the gratitude we owe to Him who has done so much for us!

Get up, Believers! Get up to your high mountain! Leave your dunghills and assume your thrones! Cast off your sackcloth! Throw away your ashes and put on your scarlet apparel! Christ has called you to fellowship with Himself, and He is no longer in the grave– He is risen! Rise! He is ascended! Ascend with Him and learn what this means, "He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus!

I know you will say you cannot see this. However, it is there– most surely there! It is just the same as in Hagar's case, with you– the same but with a difference. The fullness of fellowship with Christ is attainable! It is close to you and if you have your eyes opened to see it, as it has been given you to see Jesus as your Savior, you may rejoice w with a joy unspeakable and full of glory! God do so to you and more, also, according to His Covenant goodness in Christ Jesus. Amen and Amen. PORTIONS SOF

SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON–GENESIS 21:9-19; LIKE 24:13-31

Ge 22:1 • Abraham's Trial: A Lesson for Believers

SERMON 2223

Abraham's Trial—A Lesson For Believers

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am."

Genesis 22:1

WE may regard the father of the faithful as being a pattern of his children. As God dealt with Abraham, so will He deal in measure with all those who, as Believers, are the children of believing Abraham. Everything that will abide the fire shall go through the fire, that it may be both proved and improved. We clearly understand that when God is said to "tempt" Abraham, the word used does not carry its ordinary meaning. "Let no man say when he

is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man." But Jehovah is accustomed to try and test His people and this is what we are here to understand. The Revised Version renders the words, "God did prove Abraham" and, as I have said, God works by the same method with all His saints.

Of course, we shall not all attain to the same stature that Abraham reached, neither shall we all be tried by the same tests that were applied to him, but every one of us shall be tested, like Abraham, if, indeed, we are Believers in God. He was the Columbus who, by faith, went out and discovered a better country, that is, a heavenly– and his track has been followed by many other voyagers. Not without storms did he cross the sea and we, too, who venture after him on the voyage of faith, must expect to meet with contrary winds and waves sweeping high. We may look for a considerable measure of conformity in our lives to the life of the great Patriarch and we must not be astonished, as though some strange thing had happened to us, if great and severe tests should be put upon us before the chapter of life is over.

None of us ought to object to this. Shall the child of faith be otherwise than the father of the faithful? I may say of Abraham what our Lord said of Himself–"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord." Shall the Believer, saved and justified by faith, as Abraham was, rebel against sharing in Abraham's lot? We shall sit down, byand-by, at the same table with

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of our God. Surely we may be content to fare on the road as they fared. In fact, I hope you will say, concerning Abraham, “Where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God my God.” We are willing to take the portion of the righteous. We will not say, with wretched Balaam, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!” We would have a far better desire than that–“May my way be the way of the righteous, that my end may be like his! May I have a portion with Your people, O God: and do You deal with me as You do with all those who love Your name!”

Let us look at our text. It is a kind of preface to this unique, this unparalleled story of Abraham’s test. First, “It came to pass after these things, that God did tempt (or "prove”) Abraham"–here we see the Lord’s way with Believers. And, secondly, when God, “said unto him, Abraham,” the Patriarch instantly answered, “Behold, here I am”–here we learn the Believer’s way with the Lord. These two heads will not be difficult to remember–the Lord’s way with Believers and the Believer’s way with the Lord.

First, THE LORD’S WAY WITH BELIEVERS. He deals with His own people as He does not with the world. To be loved by God with the love He bears to His chosen is a wonderful honor, but it carries with it the Father’s authority. “Whom the Lord loves He

chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." All disciples are subject to this blessed discipline.

First of all, then, let us notice that God does deal with His people, He is never far away from them. He leaves them not to themselves, but is always near those who are truly His. God did test Abraham. It is a great thing that God should take any notice of us, poor creatures that we are. "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the noon and the stars which You have ordained; what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?" Job wondered that God dealt with him in the way of affliction, for he says, "Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?" We are so insignificant that it is a great wonder that God should come to deal with us at all. If you saw some tall archangel, whose wand might make a mast for some great man-of-war, bending down over an ant's hill, or talking with an ant, you might wonder at his stoop. But this would be nothing compared with the infinite God, the Maker of all things, condescending to deal with us worms of the earth! Yet He does so. We are precious in His sight, therefore, as the goldsmith assays the metal, as the silversmith refines the silver again and again in a furnace of earth, so does God test, purify and try us–He sets a high value upon us and, therefore, He tests us. O child of God, be glad that God comes near you! I would sooner feel His hand heavy upon me than be forgotten of Him! I would rather see His face wreathed in frowns than never see

Him at all! Oh, what an awful thing it will be for those who will be cast away from Him! To hear Him say, "Depart," will be like an infinity of wretchedness. But if He even calls us to Him that He may chasten us, His voice has music in it! Lord, blessed be Your name, You think upon Your servants! You think upon them even when You chasten them and when You test them–for this we would bless Your holy name.

Notice, next, that God not only deals with Believers very intimately, but He tests them. "God did tempt Abraham." "God did prove Abraham." Abraham was a man whose life gave good evidence of his faith in Jehovah, but the Lord is a jealous God and He loves to have still more evidence of the fidelity of His people. He hungers after clear proofs from them that they really are His–and He works in them, by His Grace, until He casts out all other loves and all other confidences that He may have the whole of their hearts–and that they may love Him and trust Him supremely.

Some of you have nothing to do with my text tonight. God does not test you because He knows very well what you are and He knows that you are not precious metal. The spurious coin is nailed down on the counter, or cast into the fire–and they that are not true people of God and have none of the silver of Grace in them will come to such an end one day and be, with shame and everlasting contempt–nailed down on the counter as counterfeits, or thrown into the fire that never shall be quenched! "Reprobate silver shall

men call them because the Lord has rejected them." It is the true coin that we try and test–and God, because He loved Abraham, valued him and saw His Grace in him, tested him.

He tested, first of all, his fear of God. That was the main point, as you will see in the 12 th verse–"Now I know thatyou fear God." The Lord delights in a man who has a holy reverence for his God. I do not hesitate to say that this is a very scarce article nowadays. When I hear of one saying that he has received "a straight tip" from God, I feel that a man capable of speaking in such a manner was never spoken to by the Infinite Jehovah! Communion with God bows a man to the dust and causes him to use lowly and reverent language. No, God never comes near to us and then leaves us in a frame of mind in which we could speak flippantly or irreverently of Him!

When I hear professing Christians arraigning God's conduct and setting up to criticize God's Word, I stand in doubt of them. O Sirs, God's true children tremble at His Word–they never question Him! "Why do you strive against Him? For He gives not account of any of His matters." "Who are you that replies against God?" The spirit of criticism is altogether alien to the spirit of the child of God! It is not what they say in their criticism that I care about. It is the spirit that dares to say it that is the evil thing. The Lord will try each one of us whether we really fear Him or not–and if the test is not so severe as that which Abraham was called to endure, still the test

will come. If we say, “No, I cannot do that. I am afraid of the consequences,” that shows that we do not fear God enough, for the man who fears God fears nothing else. The path of duty made clear, he says, “I must do it, cost what it may, for it would be infinitely more costly not to do it.” His fear of God ejects all fear of men and all fear of consequences–it is the backbone of all real holiness and all true godliness. And God tries us to see whether we have this holy awe of Him and leads us to follow in the steps of Abraham, His friend.

God also tried Abraham’s faith. Could he believe that God was right when He commanded him to slay his son? All the promises were wrapped up in Isaac! If Isaac dies, how can Abraham have a seed? He had been told, “In Isaac shall your seed be called,” not in Ishmael! What, then, if Isaac shall die? All hope of a seed must pass away. How can it be? But it was not any matter of question with Abraham. “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief.” You know what a man does when he staggers. Perhaps he does not go quite down, but he can hardly keep his feet. Abraham was never in that condition. He believed God and, therefore, he stood firm. His faith was able to face difficulties and to surmount them. When the promise of the birth of Isaac was given, we read that, “being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead.”

This was, indeed, a triumph of trust–but he went further than that. The Revised Version shows that he fully faced the difficulty and yet believed as much as ever. “Without being weakened in faith he considered his own body now as good as dead.” The faith that was undismayed when the promise of a son was uttered was still undaunted when the Lord demanded the life that He had so strangely given. Perhaps God gave such a supreme test because of its very grandeur. The trial was terrible, but still, Abraham believed. Possibly he did not understand the trial–he did not need to understand. He believed and he took God at His word and he would do what God bade him do, whatever that might be. He would leave the Lord to extricate him out of any difficulties into which his obedience might bring him. Thus God tried his faith.

Above all, God tried Abraham’s love. It may be that Isaac, though a gift from God, began to usurp God’s place. An Isaac may became an idol. The dearest thing we have, the most precious, the most beloved, may still become an abomination by being made an idol to keep us away from God. Some of the heathen worship gods of mud, others worship gods of gold, but there is no difference in the idolatry, whether the image is made of mud or of the most precious metal. Have you any idols, dear Friends? I will not press the question too closely, but whatever your idols may be, they will bring you a world of trouble, for you must love nothing in comparison with God. He must be first and everything else far

away in the background. He will endure no rivals. He will permit no Dagon to stand in the place where the Ark of the Covenant abides. So God tests Abraham to see which has most of his heart's love–Jehovah who gave Him Isaac–or Isaac whom Jehovah asked from him back again.

Thus God deals with Believers and tests them.

But the next point here is that, in some cases, God Himself tests Believers. "It came to pass after those things, that God"–"Elohim," that is the word–"Elohim did tempt Abraham." This does not always occur. Job is tried by the devil and the devil tests him, though even then God is permitting the devil to be His instrument. But God Himself was here, He, Himself, testing His servant, Abraham. I never read that He tested Lot. Poor Lot! He was a poor "lot," indeed! There was just enough Grace in him to keep him alive and no more–but he could not stand any tests. Lot failed wretchedly in Sodom. He was a righteous man and proved that he was so by being grieved with the filthy conversation of those round about him, but still, God did not test him. There was not enough true metal in him for God to try him–He left the Sodomites to do that. They were quite good enough to test Lot, but Abraham was a man of very different metal, or, at least, there was a much larger percentage of gold in Abraham than was to be found in Lot. Therefore God tested Abraham.

O Friends, there is something here to think of! Here is a peculiar character whom God, Himself, deals with. Here is a special honor put upon the servant when Elohim, Himself, tests Abraham. Have you ever prayed, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”? Invite Divine inspection and, if God shall come and by some extraordinary trial, test you, be not cast down on that account, but rather take it as a very choice favor that the King, Himself, should put you to the proof to know whether you are, indeed, His!

Further, I want you to notice that, in God’s dealings with Believers, He tests them again and again. Read the text through, “It came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham.” After all his life of holy obedience, he was still not free from trials! God still tested him. He had received great and precious promises, more than any other man of his time–and He believed them and sucked the sweetness out of them–but after these things God did try Abraham! He had had rare enjoyments. Did not angels come and sit at his table? Did not the great Melchizedek, himself, come forth with bread and wine to feast him? But after these things God tested Abraham. He had been tested before. He had left his country. He had sent away Ishmael, whom he loved, when the command came, “Cast out this bondwoman and her son.” He had been tested, but, after all this, he must still be tested!

These things are an example to all the people of God. We are not yet out of the wilderness and we may, even at the very last, have our highest test yet to come. “After these things, God did tempt Abraham.” Abraham had reached a very high point of faith and, after a time, he had enjoyed great quiet of spirit. Everything went well with him. By faith he had fought four kings and led captivity captive. By faith he had trampled on the riches of the world and told the king of Sodom that he would “not take from a thread even to a shoelace” of him. By faith he had become great with God and God had put part of His own name into Abram’s name, and made Him Abraham, blending the name of God with the name of His servant! And yet God tested Abraham–not Abram only–but even Abraham!

Note here, that God did not try Abraham like this at the beginning. It is “after these things” God tried Abraham. There was a course of education to prepare him for this great testing time and the Lord knows how to educate you up to such a point that you can endure, in years to come, what you could not endure today–just as today He may make you to stand firm under a burden, which, ten years ago, would have crushed you into the dust! After all the tuition that God had given to him–after close communion with God, receiving the Spirit of God into his soul in rich abundance–“after these things” God tested Abraham.

And here I go further and say that God tests His people by actual experience. He did not test Abraham only by words. He did not say to him, “Will you do this? Are you willing to do that?” It is always easy to say that we will do a thing if we do not expect to be compelled to do it. We can make large promises when we think we shall never be called upon to fulfill them. We can even think large things today about what we intend to do tomorrow. It is always easy to rise up early overnight. But God does not prove His people in only word, but in deed and in truth. The plain command came to Abraham which must at once be obeyed. He must go into the land of Moriah and he must offer his son there for a burnt offering. It must come to real action. How big you and I are in words! How great some people are in profession! “Oh,” they say, “we will never fail our Lord!” Like Peter they swear that, “Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will we never be offended.” They become bold in their boasts and proud in their own conceit, “professing themselves to be wise, they become as fools.” They may even turn the very Grace of God, which has enriched them, into an occasion of vainglory. “I am perfect,” says one, “and completely dead to the world. Therefore there is no fear that I shall fall. In time of trial I shall be strong–if only the martyr times were here, again, how gloriously would I testify for God!” But, after all, it is the test of real life, the test of actual experience that will show what a man is. When God comes to real filing and hammering–and

puts us into the crucible, then it is that He proves how much is dross and how much is true metal!

Some Believers are tested more thoroughly than others. In this case, the Lord tried Abraham most severely. I cannot imagine a greater test than that which the Lord applied to Abraham. The Jews usually say that Abraham was tried 10 times. Surely on this occasion he was tried 10 times in one. Here you have trial carried to the 10 th degree. Here the furnace is made 10 times hotter than it was known to be heated. There was no other in the whole universe that ever, by Divine command, offered up his only son, save One, and that One was He who commanded this sacrifice and who consummated such a sacrifice, Himself, for He will never ask of us what He will not Himself do! He gave freely for us His onlybegotten Son and Abraham stands alone, the only one of woman born, that in this was called to be a close imitator of his God. God tried him because he could bear it. He tried him in this way because of him it was said, he was the friend of God. He was the father of the believing family and, because of his high position, he must have the very greatest of troubles, trials and tests!

My last thought, under this head, shall be that if God does thus try Believers, He blesses them greatly thereby. All this testing was meant to be a great blessing to Abraham. Do I see you start back? Do you seem to say that I have used terrible language in speaking thus about God’s testing His people? Oh, but, Beloved, the tests

and trials of God's servants, though they rumble a little in our ears, as did the wagons that Joseph sent from Egypt to fetch Jacob, bring blessings to us! Those wagons came to take Jacob down to a land where he would behold the face of his Beloved and should be with him all his life! And our trials come to prepare us for the glorious meeting with our Lord. God sends us letters in black-edged envelopes, but they are all love letters! And the blacker the letters look outside, the brighter they are inside! The Lord paints the galleons of His Grace with dark colors and we dream that they bear us evil–but they are loaded down to the water's brim with gold and rare and precious things! Therefore, be confident, tried Believers–

"Trials make the promise sweet.
Trials give new life to prayer.
Trials bring me to His feet,
Lay me low and keep me there."

The first blessed effect of God's test of Abraham was that thus he avoided evil. This trial prevented him from thinkand God saw it–and He sent this test in order to put Isaac into his right place, that Isaac might not die. He would have Abraham offer him up that he might keep him. He would have him offer Isaac up to God, that he might receive him back, for he was not Abraham's son in a spiritual sense, until that day. Isaac was his son after the flesh, but, when he received him back, again, by faith, he became his son in the new

Covenant of Grace, one of the seed of Abraham after the Spirit. He received his son that day in the highest sense from God.

Do you not think, also, that it did Abraham great good in assuring his own heart and enabling him to know, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that he really did fear and love God? Some of you get to doubting whether you really do fear God. Would it not be worth while to pass through some tremendous trouble, to get that settled once and for all? I think that the Lord gives some of His people full-assuring tribulations so that when once these are past, all doubts and fears are at an end. I spoke to a child of God the other day, who said, "I do not know that, for 20 years, I have had the slightest hesitation in saying that I know whom I have believed. But," he said, "I had an awful fight just before that time." It is good to kill the lion and have done with him and then go and find honey in his carcass! It is an ordinary lion, however, that only needs killing once, for some lions I have met with have been killed a good many times, but they seem to come to life again very quickly! This test, however, Abraham needed only once and, after that, since God Himself said, "Now I know that you fear God," He doubtless enabled Abraham to say, "Now I know that I fear God."

The trial blessed him further in revealing Christ. Do you not think that, on this occasion, Abraham had a clearer view of Christ than he ever had before? Our Savior says, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad." When did Abraham see Christ?

He may have seen Him at other times, but on the top of Moriah, when his own son was on the wood and his own hand was lifted up, he must have seen the Son of God and the uplifted hand of God offering the Great Sacrifice. When He took the ram from the thicket and so saved the life of his son, how clearly he must have understood that blessed doctrine of Substitution which is the very center of the Gospel! I have no other hope than this. Nor can I conceive anything else that would be good news to me but the fact, "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," that there was offered another Life instead of mine through which I live! By a life I do not live and by a death I do not die, I am saved! So it was with Isaac when he was saved by the ram taken in the thicket. It was worth while for Abraham thus to be tested to have a view of Christ!

And, lastly, Abraham was blessed by the test in communing with the Father. To this day, perhaps, Abraham enters more into the heart of God than any other man in Heaven. I will not speculate, but it seems to me that none of us can ever know such fellowship with the great Father as Abraham has known, now, these thousands of years–for when he thinks of the great Father who surrendered His Son for the salvation of men, he humbly adores the infinite mind. But he seems to say, "And I, too, was helped in my little way, as small things may be compared with great, to stand and offer up my son as a burnt offering unto the Most High." I think that he is still

the father of the faithful. I think that Abraham still holds wonderful pre-eminence. I do not wonder that we read of being in Abraham's bosom–to get as near to Abraham as we can is one of the things to be desired–that we may have sympathy and fellowship with the eternal Father forever.

I notice that some of the old translators render the passage, "It came to pass, after these things that God did lift up Abraham." It is a strange translation and probably inaccurate, but it is wonderfully true, for all that–for God did lift up Abraham to a higher platform, altogether, and brought him into a greater nearness to Himself than he could have known in any other way.

So far, I have occupied your mind on a grand subject, the Lord's way with Believers.

II. My second subject is a very practical one. THE BELIEVER'S WAY WITH THE LORD–for if God has dealings with the Believer, the Believer also has communion with the Lord.

It takes two to make communion and fellowship. Is it not a wonderful thing that men can thus meet God and commune with Him face to face? This is the glory of faith, for, "he that comes to God must believe that He is." This is not an arbitrary condition, but arises from the nature of things. Just as in a map of the two hemispheres, the circles only touch and only can touch at one point, so God can only meet men by faith. Thus, to be a Believer in God is to have a faculty by which we can touch the Eternal.

It is not enough, however, merely to know God as the Creator. “You believe in God, believe also in Me,” says the Lord Jesus. “No man comes unto the Father, but by Me.” Better be a Believer in Christ than have all the wealth of the Indies rolled to your feet and all the thrones of the world at your disposal, for you then possess the unsearchable riches of Christ and will, one day, share His Throne of Glory! Oh, that all who now hear my words were, indeed, among those who believe! Why should you not venture at this moment to launch out on the ocean of Divine Truth? It is no venture, for a Believer in Christ is one who cannot be lost! God deals with those who believe as He dealt with Abraham and only those who believe can have dealings with Him. How, then, does the Believer act towards God? Let us look at the case before us.

God said to the Patriarch, “Abraham,” and he said, “Behold, here I am.” When God speaks to the Believer, he, on his part, is honored by the call. Have you ever heard God speak to you? I do not mean that with your ears you have heard any audible voice, but has He not spoken to your heart in such a way that, if there were no other men alive, God could not have spoken more pointedly and definitely to you? God called Abraham. It is the way with Him to say, “Samuel, Samuel.” It is the way with Him to call, “Saul, Saul.” “I have called you by your name; you are Mine.” “He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out.” What greater honor can we have than this? The King knows our name and addresses us! In

a law court, one day, a man who was quite at the back began to struggle and press his way forward. And the people angrily told him to be quiet. “Did you not hear?” he said, “I am called.” Instantly they opened a way for him to the front and admired his prompt action. How much readier we should be to reply to the voice of God, recognizing the privilege and honor thus bestowed upon us! Have you not had such a call and responded to it?

Next, the Believer shows himself ready to be taught. As soon as God said, “Abraham,” he answered, “Here I am.” He seemed to say, “Here I am, Lord, all attentive. Master, say on! Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.” Are you always in that condition, ready to be taught of God? Is His Word precious to you? Is His Holy Spirit greatly reverenced by you, so that the moment you hear Him call, you wait to hear what God the Lord will speak to you, knowing that “He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints”? Happy is the man who is thus ready to be taught!

Moreover, the Believer must be ready to obey as well as ready to be taught. He must be willing to say, “Here I stand as Your servant. I know not what the orders are going to be, but here I am. Send me where You will with what burden You will, as long as You will. Here I am.” If you are not willing to obey, you may be quite sure you are not a Believer, for obedience is the natural outcome of belief. You remember the last verse of the third of John–“he that believes on the Son has everlasting life. "And then, immediately,

another word is used which bears a stronger sense and may be rendered, "He that obeys not the Son shall not see life.” For, truly, if we believe on Christ, we shall also obey Him. Are you, dear Friend, willing to say to God, “Here I am. Send me–let me be actively engaged in Your service. Or, if it pleases You better, bid me go up to my bed, lie there and suffer sickness and pain. I am ready to obey, just as You will”? Abraham was ready to be taught and ready to obey.

And, more than that, the Believer will be equally ready to surrender. “Abraham.” “Here I am.” He does not know what God is going to ask of him. It may be Sarah. It may be Isaac. I dare say that Isaac was the last person that he expected would be asked of him, seeing that all his hopes were bound up in him and he was the child of promise. God often does the unexpected with His servants. However, there was no reserve about it. Abraham said, “Here I am”–

“Yes, should You take them all away,
Yet will I not repine.
Before they were possessed by me
They were entirely Thine.”

And they are still entirely Yours! Oh, what a glorious state of mind–to be ready to learn, ready to obey and ready to surrender!

And Abraham was also ready to be inspected. He says, “Here I am.” Adam went and hid himself in the garden and God had to call

after him, “Where are you?” Abraham was ready when God called him. It will be well if you can say, when you kneel at your bedside tonight, “Lord, I have nothing to conceal. I am sincere before You. I would have You acquainted with all my faults and sins, that You may wash them away. I would have You know all my mistakes and errors, that You may correct them all. You know all things. You know that I love You. I am no hypocrite. I have made no pretence of being Your servant while I have been serving self and sin.” O blessed man, that dares to open his bosom, to lay bare his very heart and say, “Shine into me, O Lord, and let Your searching light go through and through me, for in truth I am Your servant!”

The Believer who is prepared to respond to the Lord in such a way has much cause to praise, for he has been made education of Divine Grace that had brought him up to it. Beloved, you may think yourself ready for any service or any trial, but you are not unless Divine Grace has done great things for you. Then every act performed by Grace becomes, through Grace, an apprenticeship for a greater one!

For God’s sake, Abraham had left his country and his father’s house. Have you come out from the world? If you have not, you cannot say, “Here I am.” Poor Soul, still siding with the world, you are where you ought not to be! “Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall

be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Abraham had boldly obeyed God's command and separated himself from his old companions.

Next, Abraham had yielded to Lot. He let him take his choice of the best part of the land, even the well-watered plain of Sodom. He had not disputed with him. Are you willing to let the worldling have the best of it here, below, and to take your portion, by-and-by, in the Promised Land? If not, you cannot say, "Here I am," because you will probably be up to your neck in worldliness and as greedy after gain as anybody else! You are taking your portion among the men of Sodom and Gomorrah–how can you say, "Here I am"? Lot could not have said it, but Abraham could.

Moreover, Abraham had defied foes. Four kings came into the country and he had only a handful of servants and friends, yet he went after them like a flash of lightning and smote the four kings. Well, now, if you are a cowardly fellow and have never dared to, "Stand up, stand up for Jesus," you cannot say, "Here I am." Where are you? Hiding away, trying to save your precious skin and to avoid being laughed at for Christ? You will not be ready for the Lord's call till you come out and "fight the good fight of faith."

But God had trained His servant Abraham to do yet more. He had despised the world when he told the king of Sodom that he would not take anything of his, "from a thread even to a shoelace." And now he can say, "Here I am." Until we get free from all worldly

entanglements and cease, even in the least thing, to rely on an arm of flesh, or to resort to worldly expedients, we shall not be prepared to respond instantly to the call of God!

Abraham had gone even further. He had cast out the bondwoman and her son and now he could say, “Here I am.” As long as you hold on to legalism and trust in your own good works, you dare not rise to meet God, for you are under the Law and not under Grace! But when that is all gone, you can say, “Here I am, in the Covenant of Grace, standing in Christ Jesus, ready for anything.”

Again, Abraham had prevailed with God in prayer. You remember how he had pleaded for the wicked cities of the plain and God had allowed him to continue his intercessions with great boldness? O Beloved, you cannot say, “Here I am,” if God has never known you as a suppliant at His Throne of Grace! Sometimes I have said to myself, “The Lord Jesus Christ can never say to me at the last, ‘I never knew you: depart from Me,’ for He has known me as I know a poor man in the street who has begged of me every day.” 1 am always begging of my Lord, clamoring at Him for one thing or another. He knows me well enough. Why, when I was but a youth, I trusted Him for my eternal salvation! He called me to Himself and blessed me. I know that He will never be able to say to me, “I never knew you.” Beloved, this is why Abraham was so quick in responding to God’s call, because he was God’s friend who was on

such intimate terms with his Lord that he could intercede with Him on the behalf of guilty men!

My last thought is most precious. Since the Believer is thus prepared by Grace to respond to the Lord's call, as Abraham did, when he said, "Here I am," he will be kept ready to the end. My great desire is that you and I should be ready for anything that the Lord wills and keep always ready for it, so that if Christ should come at cock-crowing, or should come at midday, or midnight, we would be ready! And if death should come, we would be ready. And if we should lose our dearest friend, our choicest treasure, our health–anything or everything–yet still we would, each one, say, "Lord, I never made any bargain with You. I never had anything reserved from You. If it is Your will, it is my will. If You say it, so be it, for who am I, and what is Your servant, that I should dare to dispute with the Infinite Wisdom of Infallible Love?"

Happy is the man who can say, "Here I am." The Lord put you into that frame of mind and then it shall be said of you, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." You shall go merrily through life and joyfully to death–and you shall rise triumphantly in the glad morning–for when God shall call you, then you will each one answer, "Here I am, for You did call me."–"From beds of dust and silent clay,"we shall arise with songs in our mouths to answer to the Resurrection trumpet and so shall we be forever with the Lord. Thus shall all the children of faith be

blessed with faithful Abraham! God bless these words to you, dear Friends, for Jesus' sake! Amen. PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON–Genesis 22.HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"–208, 750, 703.MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

The following letter, written by MR. SPURGEON to the congregation at the Tabernacle last Lord's-Day, will give the latest information as to his progress towards recovery–Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood, September 20, 1891.

"BELOVED FRIENDS–May this Sabbath be a high day with you! May this be a day wherein the Good Shepherd shall find His lost sheep and lay them, rejoicing, on His shoulders! Mr. Fullerton, whom I greatly love in the Lord, has won many souls abroad–may he again have many gracious captives among us at home!

"I would not write of myself, only you need to know, and you desire to know all that I can tell. I am sitting up this morning to write you before the doctor comes at 8:30 and so I cannot tell what he will say of me. The affectionate and effectual prayers of the saints dragged me back to life and only by the same means shall I recover strength. I will not touch upon my present affliction. You will guess at it when I say that, although the stairs to my bedroom are very easy, I cannot ascend them, but have to be carried up by others. The heart as yet will not endure even that small climb, therefore I still need your prayers and I know I shall have them, for your love never ceases.

“You have kept together most lovingly during the four months now nearly over. Can you abide my further absence, which is painful to me, and yet absolutely needed? The Lord grant it, I shall come among you fit for service, but it cannot be for months. The Lord does not give half-mercies. He will perfect that which concerns us. How He has heard prayer! Had I died, all infidelity would have noted it as a proof that prayer was useless–we have a right, now, to score one on the other side. You would have been much discouraged if prayer had not been answered and it is fair that now you should be equally encouraged and established in your confidence in the prayer-hearing Jehovah!

“The Lord bless every one of you! Let our love continue in all patience of hope. "Yours ever heartily, C. H. SPURGEON.”

Ge 22:2 • Mature Faith — Illustrated by Abraham's

SERMON 0868

M*ature Faith—Illustrated By Abraham's Offering Up Isaac*

"And He said, Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and get you into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you of."

Genesis 22:2

I DO not intend to enter into this narrative in its bearing upon our Lord, although we have here one of the most famous types of the Only-Begotten, whom the Great Father offered up for the sins of His people. Perhaps that may be the subject this evening. But as I have, in the recollection of some of you, already given you three

sermons upon the life of Abraham, [See Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit–Volume 14–Nos. 843, 844, 845–"Effectual Calling–Illustrated by the Call of Abram." "Justification by Faith–Illustrated by Abram's Righteousness." "Consecration to God–Illustrated by Abraham's Circumcision."] illustrating his effectual calling, his justification and his consecration to the Lord, we will now complete the series by dwelling upon the triumph of Abraham's faith when his spiritual life had come to the highest point of maturity.

Opening your Bibles at this chapter, you will please observe the time when God tried Abraham with the severest of his many ordeals. It was "after these things," that is to say, after nine great trials, each of them most searching and remarkable. After he had passed through a great flight of affliction and had through the process been strengthened and sanctified, he was called to endure a still sterner test. From which fact it is well to learn that God does not put heavy burdens upon weak shoulders and He does not allot ordeals fit only for full-grown men to those who are but babes. He educates our faith, testing it by trials which increase little by little in proportion as our faith has increased.

He only expects us to do man's work and to endure man's afflictions when we have passed through the childhood state and have arrived at the stature of men in Christ Jesus. Expect then, Beloved, your trials to multiply as you proceed towards Heaven!

Do not think that as you grow in Divine Grace the path will become smoother beneath your feet and the heavens serener above your heads. On the contrary, reckon that as God gives you greater skill as a soldier, He will send you upon more arduous enterprises. And as He more fully fits your boat to brave the tempest and the storm, so will He send you out upon more boisterous seas and upon longer voyages, that you may honor Him and still further increase in holy confidence.

You would have thought that Abraham had now come to the land Beulah, that in his old age, after the birth of Isaac and especially after the expulsion of Ishmael, he would have had a time of perfect rest. Let this warn us that we are never to reckon upon rest from tribulation this side of the grave. No, the trumpet still sounds the note of war. You may not yet sit down and bind the wreath of victory about your brow–no garlands of laurel and songs of victory for you, yet–you have still to wear the helmet and bear the sword. You must still watch and pray, and fight, expecting that, perhaps, your last battle will be the worst and that the fiercest charge of the foe may be reserved for the end of the day.

Having thus observed the time when God was pleased to try the great pattern of Believers, we shall now look at the trial itself. We shall next see Abraham's behavior under it, and shall, in conclusion, spend a little time in noting the reward which came to him as the result of his endurance.

And first, THE TRIAL ITSELF. Every syllable of the text is significant. If George Herbert were speaking of it, he would say the words are all a case of knives cutting at Abraham's soul. There is scarcely a single syllable of God's address to him, in the opening of this trial, but seems intended to pierce the Patriarch to the quick. Look. "Take now your son." What? A father slay his son! Was there nothing in Abraham's tent that God would have but his son? He would cheerfully have given Him sacrifices of bullocks and flocks of sheep! All the silver and the gold he possessed he would have lavished from the bag with eager cheerfulness!

Will nothing content the Lord but Abraham's son? If one must be offered of humankind, why not Eliezer of Damascus, the steward of his house? Must it be his son? How this tugs at the father's heartstrings! His son, the offspring of his own loins, must be made a burnt offering! Will not God be content with any proof of his obedience but the surrender of the fruit of his body? The word only is made particularly emphatic by the fact that Ishmael had been exiled at the command of God. Very much to Abraham's grief Hagar's child had been driven out. "Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." So said Sarah–and God bade the Patriarch regard the voice of his wife, so that now Isaac was his only son.

If Isaac shall die, there is no other descendant left and no probabilities of any other to succeed him. The light of Abraham

will be quenched and his name forgotten. Sarah is very old, as he himself is also–no infant's cry will again gladden the tent–and Isaac is his only son, a lone star of the night, the only son, the lamp of his father's old age. Nor is that all–"Your only son, Isaac." What a multitude of memories that word, "Isaac," awoke in Abraham's mind! This was the child of promise, of a promise graciously given, of a promise, the fulfillment of which was anxiously expected, but long, long, long delayed.

Isaac, who had made his parents' hearts to laugh–the child of the Covenant–the child in whom the father's hopes all centered, for he had been assured, "In Isaac shall your seed be called." What? After all must the gift of God be retracted? Must the Covenant of God be nullified, and the channel of the promised blessings be dried up forever? Oh, trial of trials! "Your son." "Your only son." "Your only son, Isaac." And it was added, "whom you love." Must he be reminded of his love to his heir at the very time when he is to lose him? Oh, stern word that seems to have no heart of compassion in it! Was it not enough to take away the loved one, without at the same instant awakening the affections which were so rudely to be shocked?

Isaac was very rightly beloved of his father, for in addition to the ties of nature and his being the gift of God's Divine Grace, Isaac's character was most lovely. His behavior on the occasion of his sacrifice proves that in his spirit there was an abundance of

humility, obedience, resignation and gentleness–indeed, of everything which can make up the beauty of holiness! And such a character was quite sure to have won the admiration of his father, Abraham, whose spiritual eyes were well qualified to discern the excellences which shone in his beloved son. Ah, why must Isaac die? And die, too, by his father's hand! Oh, trial of trials!

Contemplative imagination and sympathetic emotion can better depict the father's grief than any words which it is in my power to use. I cast a veil where I cannot paint a picture! But note, not only was this tender father to lose the best of sons, but he was to lose him in the direst way. He must be sacrificed–he must be sacrificed by the father himself! If the Lord had said, "Speak with Eliezer and charge him to offer up your son," it would have softened the trial. But so far as Abraham could understand the command, it seemed to say, you Abraham, you must be the priest. Your own hand must grasp the sacrificial knife and you must stand there with breaking heart to drive the knife into the breast of your son and see him consumed, even to ashes, upon the altar.

All this appeared to him to be involved in God's word, although the Lord meant not so, but meant to accept the will for the deed. Everything was designed to make the trial severe. The friend of God was tried in such a way as probably never fell to the lot of man before or since. In addition to the sacrifice, Abraham was commanded to go to a mountain which God would show him. It is

easy, on the spur of the moment, and under the influence of sacred impulse, to hastily perform an heroic deed of self-sacrifice. But it is not so easy for men of passions, such as ours, to deliberate over the sacrifices demanded of us.

But Abraham must have three days to chew this bitter pill which was, indeed, hard enough, merely, to swallow and all the more unpalatable when a man is made to learn in detail the wormwood and the gall–he must journey on with that dear son before his eyes all day–listening to that voice so soon to be silent and gazing into those bright eyes so soon to swim with tears and to be dimmed in death. Abraham would have to remember in him his mother's joy and his own delight, and all the while meditating upon that fatal stroke which, so far as he knew, God required of him. Oh, this laying siege to us by long and careful barricade is that which tries us! A sharp assault we might far better bear!

To be burnt to death quickly upon the blazing firewood is comparatively an easy martyrdom. But to hang in chains roasting at a slow fire–to have the heart, hour by hour, pressed as in a vice–this it is that which tries faith! And this it was that Abraham endured through three long days! Only faith, mighty faith, could have assisted him to look in the face the grim trial which now assailed him. The Patriarch was, no doubt, moved and tried and exercised not merely by the words which God pronounced in his hearing, but by natural and painful suggestions which, however

readily they may have been disposed of, were, it would appear to us, certain to arise.

He might have said, “I am called upon to perform an act which violates every instinct of my nature, I am to offer up my child! Horrible! Murderous! I am to burn my slaughtered child as a religious act–terrible, barbarous, detestable! I am, myself, to offer him upon the altar deliberately. How can I do it? How can God ask me to do that which tears up by the roots every one of the affections which He Himself has implanted–which runs counter to the whole of my noblest humanity? How can I do this?”

Brothers and Sisters, coming home to ourselves and trying to make a personal application of this, we may be called by the Word of God to acts of obedience which may seem to us to do violence to all our natural affections. Christians are sometimes commanded to come out from the world by decided acts which provoke the hatred of those who are nearest and dearest. Now, if they love God, they will not love father nor mother, nor husband, nor brother, nor sister in comparison with Him. And though Christians will ever be among the most tender-hearted of men, they will count their allegiance to God to be such that they must give up all for His sake, and deny every natural affection sooner than violate the Divine Law.

Perhaps today you are suffering under an affliction which is grieving all the powers of your nature. Perhaps the Lord has been

pleased to take away from you one dearer than life–for whom you could have been well content to die. Oh, learn with Abraham to kiss the rod! Let not Isaac stand before God! Let Isaac be dear, but let Isaac die sooner than God should be distrusted! Bow your head and say, "Take what You will, my God. Slay me, or take all I have, but I will still bless Your holy name." This was a main part of Abraham's trial–that it appeared to crush rudely all the tender outgrowths of the heart. And it may have suggested itself to Abraham that he would in this way, by the slaughter of his son, be rendering all the promises of God futile.

A very severe trial, that, for in proportion as a man believes the promise and values it, will be his fear to do anything which might render it of no effect. Brethren, there are times with us when we are called to a course of action which looks as though it would jeopardize our highest hopes. A Christian man is sometimes bound by duty to perform an action which, to all appearances, will destroy his future usefulness. I have often heard men urge, as a plea for remaining in a corrupt Church, that they would lose the influence they had obtained in its midst by reason of their position if they followed their conscience and were true to God. But they are bound to lose all their supposed influence and renounce their apparent vantage ground sooner than commit the least trespass upon their conscience! As much bound to do so as Abraham was bound to offer up Isaac–in whom all the promises of God were centered.

It is neither your business nor mine to fulfill God's promise, nor to do the least wrong to produce the greatest good. To do evil that good may come is false morality and wicked policy! For us is duty–for God is the fulfillment of His own promise and the preservation of our usefulness. Though He dash my reputation into shivers and cast my usefulness to the four winds, yet if duty calls me, I must not hesitate a single second–for in that hesitation I shall be disobedient to my God! At the behest of God, Isaac must be offered though the heavens fall! And faith must answer all polite suggestions by the assurance that what God ordains can never, in its ultimate issue, produce anything but good! Obedience can never endanger blessings, for commands are never in real conflict with promises–God can raise up Isaac and fulfill His own decree.

Further, Abraham may have felt–one would think must have felt–the thought that the death of Isaac was the destruction of all his comfort. The tent shall be darkened for Sarah and the plain of Mamre barren as a wilderness for her lamenting heart. Alas for the wretched parent who has lost the hope of his old age and the stay of his decrepitude! The sun grows black at noon and the moon is eclipsed in darkness if Isaac dies. Better that all calamities should have happened than this dear child be taken away! He must have felt thus, but it did not make him hesitate. Sometimes the course of duty may lie right over the dead body of our dearest comfort and

our brightest hope. It may be our duty to do that which will involve a succession of sorrows all but endless.

But you must do right come what may. If the Lord bids you, you must seek faith to do it, though from that moment never should another joy make glad your heart until you are fully compensated for the loss of all by entering into the joy of your Lord at the last. It must also, I should think, have occurred to Abraham, though he did not let it weigh with him, that from that time forth he would make himself many enemies. Many would distrust his character. Many would count him a perfect wretch–he would find wherever he went that he was shunned as a murderer of his own child. How should he bear to meet Sarah again? "Where is my son? Surely a bloody husband are you to me," she would say, with far greater truth than Zipporah to Moses.

How could he meet his servants again? How could he bear their looks which would say to him, "You have slain your son! Embraced our hands in the blood of your own offspring!" How could he face Abimelech and the Philistines? How would the wandering tribes which roamed about his tent all hear of this strange massacre and shudder at the thought of the monster who defiled the earth on which he trod! And yet observe the holy carelessness of this godlike man as to what might be thought or said of him. What mattered it to him? Let them count him a devil–let a universal hiss consign him to the lowest Hell of hatred and

contempt–he reckons not of it. God's will must be done! God will take care of His servant's character, or if He does not, His servant must suffer the consequences for his Lord's sake.

Abraham must obey! No second course is open to him. He will not think of disobedience. He knows that God is right and he must do God's will, come what may. This, mark you, is one of the most grand points about the faith of the father of the faithful–and if you and I shall be called to exhibit it, may we never be found lacking–but brave calumny and reproach with cheerfulness, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

How Luther's lips must at first have trembled when he ventured to say that the Pope was Antichrist! Why, Man, how can you dare to say such a thing? Millions bow down before him! He is the vicar of God on earth! Do they not worship our Lord God the Pope? "Yet he is Antichrist and a very devil," said Luther. And at first he must have felt his ears burn and his cheeks grow red at such a piece of apparent wickedness. And when he found himself shunned by the ecclesiastics who once had courted Doctor Martin Luther's company, think of what emptiness he must have felt!

And when he heard the common howl that went up–even from the refuse of mankind–that the monk was a drunkard and, inasmuch as he chose to marry a nun, was filled with lust and sold to Satan and I know not what beside, it must have been a grand thing when Luther could feel, "They may call me what they will, but I know

that God has spoken unto my soul the great Truth that man is to be saved by faith in Jesus Christ and not by ceremonies which the Pope ordains, nor the indulgences which he grants. And if my name is consigned to the limbo of the infernal, yet will I speak out the Truth of God which I know, and in God's name I will not hold my tongue." We must be brought to this–to be willing to put aside the verdict of our times and of all times past or future and to stand alone, if need be, in the midst of a howling and infuriated world, to do honor to the command of God which is the only necessity to us. It is imperative for us to obey, even though it should bring shame or death itself.

Here, then, was Abraham's faith made perfect, that, inasmuch as the outward circumstances were severe and the suggestions arising out of the circumstances were peculiarly perplexing, he put aside both and dared the ills of all in order that he might, without delay or objection, fulfill his Master's will to the full extent–firmly believing that no hurt would come of it, but rather he, himself, should be more blessed and God more glorified.

II. We shall now notice THE PATRIARCH UNDER THE TRIAL. In Abraham's bearing during this test everything is delightful. In trying to mention each detail, I fear that I may mar the effect of the whole. His obedience is a picture of all the virtues in one, blended in marvelous harmony! It is not so much in one point that the great Patriarch excels as in the whole of his sacred deed.

First notice the submission of Abraham under this temptation. His submission, I say, because you will observe that there is no record kept of any answer which Abraham gave to God, verbally, or in any other form. I suppose, therefore, that there was none. Strange and startling command, "Take your only son and offer him for a burnt sacrifice!" But Abraham does not argue the point. It is natural to expect that he should have said, "But, Lord, do You really mean it? Can a human sacrifice ever be acceptable to You? I know it cannot. You are love and kindness–can You take delight, therefore, in the blood of my dear son? It cannot be."

But there is not a word of argument! Not one solitary question that even looks like hesitation. "God is God," he seems to say and it is not for me to ask Him why, or seek a reason for His bidding. He has said it. "I will do it." There does not appear to have been a word of entreaty or prayer. Prayer against so dread a trial might not have been sinful. If the man had been less a man it might have been not only natural, but right for him to say, "O my God, spare my child! Put me on some other trial, but not on this, so strange, so mysterious. My Lord, for Sarah's sake and for Your promise sake, test me not so."

I say that such a prayer as that might not have been sinful from an ordinary man. It might have been, perhaps, even virtuous and commendable–but from this grand soul there is no such prayer! He does not ask to escape. He does not pray to be delivered when he

once knows God's will. Much less is there the semblance of murmuring. The man goes about the whole business as if he had been only ordered to sacrifice a lamb ordinarily taken from the flock. There is a coolness of deliberation about it which does not prove that he was a stoic, but which does prove that he was gigantic in his faith! "Not staggering," says the Apostle–and that is just the word.

You and I, if we had done right, would have done it in a staggering, hesitating manner–but Abraham–not a nerve quivers, not a muscle is paralyzed. He knows that God commands him and with awful sternness, and yet with childlike simplicity, he sets about the sacrifice. The lesson I gather from this (and we may as well collect these lessons as we go, as gleaners who gather the ears as they walk down the furrows)–the lesson is this–when you know a duty, never pray to be excused but go and do it in God's name in the power of faith. If ever you clearly see your Master's will, do not begin to argue it or wait for better opportunities and so on–do it at once!

I know not how much of joy and honor some of you may have missed by the evil habit of beating around the bush with your consciences. It is a very terrible thing to begin to let conscience grow hard, for it soon sears as with a hot iron. It is like the freezing of a pond. The first film of ice is scarcely perceptible–keep the waters stirring and you will prevent the ice from hardening it. But

once let it film over and remain so, it thickens over the surface and it thickens still and at last it is so solid that a wagon might be drawn over the solid water. So with conscience. It films over gradually and at last it becomes hard, unfeeling–and it can bear up with a weight of iniquity. Ah, it is not for us to delay obedience under the pretense of prayer, but to yield prompt service.

I have been sometimes surprised and staggered with Christian people who have said in the matter of Baptism, for instance, "I am persuaded that it is my duty as a Believer to be baptized, but it has never been laid home to my conscience." Never laid home to your conscience?! You know that God commands and yet you dare confess your conscience has become so base that you do not feel it your duty to obey?! "Oh, but I have not felt that it is impressed on me." Felt! And is feeling to be the measure of your allegiance to God, the clipper and the cutter of God's Law? If you know it to be the right, I charge you on your faith, obey!

O Sirs, this world has come to a sad pass because of the tricks men play with their consciences! This is the cause of all those unnatural senses that people give to texts and creeds! This is the secret reason why the religion of this land which claims to be Protestant, is becoming Popish to its very core–because evangelical men have sworn to a Popish catechism and given it another sense–and instead of coming out of a corrupt Church, have dallied with their consciences and so by their practice have nullified their

preaching and taught men to lie! Small wonder is it that traders rob and cheat when men professing godliness use words in senses which they can never bear to unsophisticated minds. If professing men were but jealous for the glory of God and exact and precise in all their walking before the Most High, they would have more of the honor, more of the blessedness of Abraham–and their influence upon the world would be more like salt and less like the evil leaven which corrupts the mass.

But we must pass on to notice next Abraham's prudence. Prudence, some of us heard this last week, may be a great virtue, but often becomes one of the meanest and most beggarly of vices. Prudence rightly considered is a notable handmaid to faith. And the prudence of Abraham was seen in this, that he did not consult Sarah as to what he was about to do. Naturally, Prudence, as we call it, would have said, "This is a strange command. You had better consult with the wise about it. You believe it comes from God, but you may be mistaken in your impression. At least, it is due to Sarah, having such an interest in her own child, to take her judgment in the matter. Moreover, there is that good man Eliezer–he has often helped and guided you in a dilemma–you had better have a talk with him."

"Yes," but Abraham probably thought, "these beloved ones may weaken me. They cannot strengthen my resolution or alter my duty," and, therefore, like Paul, he did not consult with flesh and

blood. After all, my Brethren, what is the good of consulting when we know the Lord's mind? If I go to the Bible and see very plainly there that such-and-such a thing is my duty–for me to consult with man as to whether I shall obey God or not is treason against the Majesty of Heaven! It is vile for us to consult with men when we have the plain command of God! Fancy an inferior officer in an army, when ordered in the hour of battle to lead an attack, turning round to a fellow soldier to ask his opinion of the orders he has received from the commander-in-chief! Let the man be tried by court-martial, or shot down upon the field–he is utterly unloyal! It needs no overt act. The thought is mutiny! The words of enquiry a flat rebellion. When God commands, we have nothing left but to obey. Consultations with flesh and blood are sins of scarlet dye.

Notice, further, Abraham's alacrity. He rose early in the morning. Oh, but the most of us would have taken a long sleep! Or if we could not nave slept, we would have lain till dinner time at least, tossing restlessly. "What? Slay my son–my only son Isaac? The command does not specify the hour–there is no peremptory word as to the time of starting upon the awful journey. At least let us postpone it as long as we may, for the dear young man's sake! Let him live as long as possible." But no. Delay was not in the Patriarch's mind. Is it not grand? The holy man rises early! He will let his God see that He can trust him and that he will do His bidding without reluctance.

O Believers, always be prompt in doing what God commands you! Hesitate not! The very pith of your obedience will lie in your making haste and delaying not to keep the Lord's commandment. He showed his alacrity, again, by the fact that he prepared the wood himself. It is expressly said that he "split the wood." He was a sheik and a mighty man in his camp, but he became a wood-splitter, thinking no work menial if done for God and reckoning the work too sacred for other hands. With splitting heart he splits the wood. Wood for the burning of his heir! Wood for the sacrifice of his own dear child! Herein you see the alacrity of Abraham and may it be ours to obey God with such a ready zeal that in every little circumstance of our obedience it shall be seen that we are not unwilling slaves chained to the oar of duty and flogged to service by the threats of the Law, but loving children of a Father whom we count it our highest joy to serve, even though that service should involve the sacrifice of our dearest Isaacs.

Further, I must ask you to notice Abraham's forethought. He did not desire to break down in his deeds. Having split the wood, he took with him the fire and everything else necessary to consummate the work. Some people take no forethought about serving God and then if a little hitch occurs, they cry out that it is a Providential circumstance and make an excuse of it for escaping the unpleasant task. Oh, how easy it is when you do not want to involve yourselves in trouble, to think that you see some reason for

not doing so! “You know,” says one, “we must live.” “Ah,” says another, “why should I throw myself out of a situation merely because of a small point of conscience? And, indeed, there has just now happened a circumstance which almost compels me to act against my belief, at least for a time. Indeed, Providence dearly bids me remain as I am. I know the Bible says I ought to act differently, but still, you know, we must take circumstances into consideration, and if they do not quite alter the commandments, they may, you know, be an excuse for postponing obedience.”

Abraham, the wise, thoughtful servant of God, takes care, as far as possible, to forestall all difficulties that might prevent his doing right. “No,” he says, “there is no compromise for me, my duty is clear. Does God command it? I will provide all that is necessary for the fulfillment of His will. I want no excuse for drawing back, for draw back I will not, come what may.” Observe, further, Abraham’s perseverance. He continues three days in his journey, journeying towards the place where he was as much to sacrifice himself as to sacrifice his child. He bids his servants remain where they were, fearful, perhaps, lest they might be moved by pity to prevent the sacrifice.

Now you and I would have liked to provide ourselves with some friend who might have stepped in to prevent and have taken the responsibility off our shoulders. But, no, the good man puts everything aside that may prevent him going to the end. Then he

puts the wood on Isaac. Oh, what a load he placed on his own heart as he lay that burden on his dear son! He carried the fire himself in the censer at his side, but what a fire consumed his heart! How sharp was the trial when the son said, “My Father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb?” Was there no tear for the Patriarch to brush away? He made but a short reply.

We have every reason to believe that other replies followed which are not recorded, in which he explained to his son how the case stood and what it was that God had commanded. It is hard to suppose that Isaac would have blindly yielded, unless first an explanation had been given that such a command had come from the highest Authority and must be obeyed. Oh, the unhappiness of the father’s mind! But let me rather say the majesty of the father’s faith that he puts down all his feelings and though Nature speaks, yet Faith speaks louder, still. And if the deep of his affliction calls out loud, yet the deeper faith in his God calls louder still.

Now see him! See the holy man as he gathers up the loose stones which lie upon Mount Moriah! See him take them and with the assistance of his son, place them one upon another till the altar has been built. Do you see him next lay the wood upon the altar in order? No signs of flurry or trepidation. See him bind his son with cords! Oh, what cords were those binding his poor, poor heart! He lays his son upon the altar as though he were a victim! Now he unsheathes the knife and the deed is about to be done!

But God is content. Abraham has truly sacrificed his son in his heart and the command is fulfilled. Notice the obedience of this friend of God–it was no playing at giving up his son–it was really doing it. It was no talking about what he could do and would do, perhaps–his faith was practical and heroic. I call upon all Believers to note this! We must not only love God so as to hope that we should be ready to give up all for Him, but we must be literally and actually ready to do it! We must ask for more faith, that when the trial comes, we shall not be proved to have been mere windbag pretenders–mere wordy talkers–but true to God in very deed.

"Ah," said one the other night, "I thought I had great faith, but now that I am racked with pain, I find I have scarcely any." "Oh," might some of us say, "my God, I thought I had faith in You, but now it comes to the endurance of this affliction which You put upon me, I am ready to kick against You and cannot say, 'Your will be done.'" Ah, how many professors love God until it comes to losing their pence and their pounds! They will obey God until it involves penury and poverty. They will be faithful to God till it comes to scoffing and shame and then straightway they are offended and thereby prove who is their god–for they turn away from the unseen and look for what they call the main chance–for the interest of time and their own gain and their own pleasures. God is no God of theirs except to talk about. Let Christ's commands be pleasing and men will accept them. Let them grind a

little too severely and men turn aside, for, after all, most professors serve their God up to a certain point, but no further and so show that they love not God at all.

I have but very feebly brought out into the light the obedience of Abraham. I must not, however, leave the picture till I have mentioned what was at the bottom of it all. Paul tells us in the 11 th chapter of Hebrews, that "by faith Abrahamoffered up Isaac." Now what was the faith that enabled Abraham to do this? Although many expositors think not, I adhere to the opinion that Abraham felt in his own mind that God could not lie and God's Word could not fail, and therefore hoped to see Isaac raised from the dead. "Now," he said to himself, "I have had an express promise that in Isaac shall be my seed. And if I am called to put him to death, that promise must still be kept and perhaps God will raise him from the dead. Even if his body is consumed to ashes the Lord can yet restore my son to life."

We are told in the New Testament that he believed in God, that He could raise Isaac from the dead, from which he also received him in a figure. Some have said, "But this lessens the trial." Granted, if you will, but it does not lessen the faith–and it is the faith which is most to be admired. He was sustained under the trial by the conviction that it was possible for God to raise his son from the dead and so to fulfill His promise. But under that, and lower down, there was in Abraham's heart the conviction that by some

means, if not by that means, God would justify him in doing what he was to do–that it could never be wrong to do what God commanded him–that God could not command him to do a wrong thing! And therefore doing it he could not possibly suffer the loss of the promise made in regard to Isaac.

In some way or other, God would take care of him if he did but faithfully keep to God's command. And I think the more indistinct Abraham's idea may have been of the way in which God could carry out the promise, the more glorious was the faith which still held to it that nothing could frustrate the promise and that he would do his duty, come what might. Brethren beloved in the Lord, believe that all things work together for your good, and if you are commanded by conscience and God's Word to do that which would bankrupt you or cast you into disrepute, it cannot be a real hurt to you! It must be all right!

I have seen men cast out of work owing to their keeping the Lord's-Day. Or they have been, for a little time, out of a situation because they could not fall into the tricks of trade and they have suffered awhile. But, alas, some of them have lost heart after a time and yielded to the evil! O for the faith which never will, under any persuasion or compulsion, fly from the field! If men had strength enough to say, "If I die and rot I will not sin. If they cast me out to the carrion crow, yet still nothing shall make me violate my conscience, or do what God commands me not to do, or fail to do

what God commands me to perform!" This is the faith of Abraham! Would to God we had it! We should have a glorious race of Christians if such were the case!

III. I have left myself only a few minutes for the last point, which is, let us OBSERVE THE BLESSING WHICH CAME TO ABRAHAM THROUGH THE TRIAL OF HIS FAITH. The blessing was sevenfold. First, the trial was withdrawn–Isaac was unharmed. The nearest way to be at the end of tribulation is to be resigned to it. God will not try you when you can fully bear any trial. Give up all and you shall keep all. Give up your Isaac and Isaac shall not need to be given up! But if you will save your life, you shall lose it.

Secondly, Abraham had the expressed approval of God–"Now I know that you fear God." The man whose conscience bears witness with the Holy Spirit enjoys great peace and that peace comes to him because under that trial he has proved himself a true and faithful servant. O Brothers and Sisters, if we cannot stand the trials of this life, what shall we do in the Day of Judgment? If in the common scales held in the hand of Providence we are found wanting, what shall we do before that Great White Throne where every thought shall be brought into judgment before the Most High? How will you run with the horsemen at the last if you cannot run with the footmen now? If we are afraid of a little loss and a little scorn, what should we have done in days of the martyrs–when

men counted not their lives dear to them that they might win Christ?

Abraham next had a clearer view of Christ than ever he had before–no small reward. “Abraham saw My day,” said Christ–“He saw it and was glad.” In himself, ready to sacrifice his son, he had a representation of Jehovah who spared not His own Son. In the ram slaughtered instead of Isaac, he had a representation of the great Substitute who died that men might live. More than that, to Abraham God’s name was more fully revealed that day. He called Him Jehovah-Jireh, a step in advance of anything that he had known before. “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.” The more you can stand the test of trials, the better instructed shall you be in the things of God. There is light beyond if you have Grace to press through the difficulty.

To Abraham that day the Covenant was confirmed by oath. The Lord swore by Himself! Brothers and Sisters, you shall never get the Grace of God so confirmed to you as when you have proved your fidelity to God by obeying Him at all costs. You shall then find how true are the promises, how faithful is God to the Covenant of Grace. The quickest road to full assurance is perfect obedience! While assurance will help you to obey, obedience will help you to be assured–“If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love. Even as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”

Then it was that Abraham had, also, a fuller promise with regard to the seed. Out of 10 promises which Abraham received, the first are mainly about the land. But the last are concerning his seed. We get to love Christ more, to value Him more, to see Him and to understand Him better the more we are consecrated to the Lord's will. And last of all, God pronounced over Abraham's head a blessing, the like of which had never been given to man before! And what if I say that to no single individual in the whole lapse of time has there ever been given, distinctly and personally, such a blessing as was given to Abraham that day?! First in trial, he is also first in blessing! First in faithfulness to his God, he becomes first in the sweet rewards which faithfulness is sure to obtain!

Brothers and Sisters, let us ask God to make us like Abraham, His true children, that we may gain such rewards as he obtained. May He help us to make a surrender this morning in our hearts of all that we have of the dearest objects of our affections. May we by faith take all to the altar today in our willingness to give all up, if so the Lord wills. This day may we feel the spirit of perfect faith, believing that God's promises must be kept though circumstances of outward Providence and even our own inward feelings should seem to belie the sure Word of God. Let us labor to know the reality of life by faith! May we believe God in the same literal way in which we believe our friends–but only after a higher and surer sort!

Let us from this day so believe in God that we shall never ask a question about consequences whenever we have a conviction of duty. May we never pause to ask whether this shall make us rich or poor, honorable, or despised–whether this will bring us peace or bring us anguish–but onward, right onward, as though God had shot us from the eternal bow, let us go right on in the full conviction that if there is temporary darkness it must end in everlasting light! If there is present loss, it must end in eternal gain! Let us set to our seal that God is true, that the rewards are to the righteous, and true peace to the obedient! Let us believe that in the end it must be our highest gain to serve God though that service should, for the present, bring with it dire loss!

O that there may be trained in this House a race of much enduring Believers, who can endure hardness, but cannot endure sin! May you, my Brothers and Sisters, obey your convictions as constantly as matter obeys the laws of gravitation and may you never sell your birthright for the world's wretched pottage. Could this House be filled with such men and women, London would shake beneath the tramp of our army! This whole land would perceive that a new power had arisen up in the land!

Truth and righteousness would exalt their horn on high and then would deceitful trading and greed for gold and Jesuitical faltering with words–this flirting with the Popish harlot–would be put to an end once and for all. O that the flag of truth and righteousness

might be unfurled by a valiant band–for that banner shall wave in the day of the last triumph when the banners of earth shall be rolled in blood! May our God thus bless us and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him. The Lord make us true men like Abraham, true because believing, and may He help us to sacrifice our all, if need be, for Jesus' sake. Amen. PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON–Genesis 22.

Ge 22:8 • A Type and Its Teaching

SERMON 3523

A *Type And Its Teaching*

"And Abraham said, My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering."

Genesis 22:8

How stern the trial! How striking the triumph! How sublime, both in action and passion, was the faith of Abraham in that terrible crisis. It pleased God to try him on a very tender point. Abraham had received a great promise, on the fulfillment of which he greatly relied. Year after year elapsed, but no sign of the long-looked-for child appeared. At length old age crept over the Patriarch and his wife. Still he looked steadfastly for the promise because he believed implicitly in the Promiser. He considered not the

infirmities of his own body, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb–he waited patiently, not doubting that God would, in due time, according to His promise, give him a son. What marvel, then, that this son, when born, should be the object of Abraham's fondest affection? Moreover, a strange halo of hope gathers round the lad's head, for God has made him the heir of a Covenant. It is in Isaac and in Isaac's seed that God will fulfill His Covenant which He has made with Abraham. No, something still more mysterious is linked with that youth's life. It is in him that all the nations of the earth will be blessed. And now, when the Lord says, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love," there is a cut in every word at the most tender part of Abraham's soul. To slay his own son, to cut off his hope of posterity, to sacrifice for a burnt-offering that son who was a special gift of God's bounty, to kill him in whom he looked for a further fulfillment of God's promise–to stop that golden pipe through which mercy is to flow to the whole world, to dam up that silver stream which is to enrich nations yet unborn–that were to blast Abraham's brightest hopes as well as to wound his most tender affections! God has cherished in him high anticipations. He has been pleased to give him strength of mind and faith of heart enough to see these expectations realized in a vision. And must that vision, after all, flit from before his eyes? Must his faith become a delusion and all his hopes a mockery? So it would seem! And yet mark the faith of Abraham–he not only submits to

the loss of his choicest jewel, and to tear away one who was bound to his heart by ties stronger than flesh and blood–but in doing it, he staggers not, for he still believes that God will be true to His promise!

It strikes me that this was the master work of Abraham's faith. To sacrifice Isaac was a wonder of patient submission and devout resignation, but the faith which was at the root of it all challenges our highest admiration! Still, to believe that God is able to raise Isaac from the dead, or to turn the stones which were wet with Isaac's blood into a new offspring, or, (for I know not which theory Abraham may have adopted), to believe that the whole Covenant was spiritual and that he must wait to see the seed of Isaac in another world, and not in this–in any case to believe that God must be true, that though Isaac died, God would keep His word and that He is able to do so notwithstanding all apparent impossibilities–that He will transmute stones to men, or raise that body after it has been slain, into newness of life–here was the climax of a faith that realized the grandeur and the goodness of the Divine Attributes and perfections, for he simply and sincerely believed and relied upon God!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, there are some men who can make great sacrifices for God–they have done so and herein they have emulated the example of Abraham. But the Patriarch showed a clear understanding, an unwavering calmness, a full assurance of

hope to which few have attained. When in the very fact of presenting to God your sacrifice, can you account that you are losing nothing, but committing your treasure to His custody? Can you believe that the promise of God is not compromised by your parting with the earnest that gladdened your eyes? Has God given you a son, such an one as you can say of, “For this child I prayed”? Is he the pride of your life and the joy of your life? Do you think of him as the solace of your age and the perpetuator of your name in the world? What, now, if God shall call you to devote him as a missionary? Could you readily comply? Would you count it all gain? Could you interpret it as a blighting of your own prospect, or as a blooming of God’s purpose? Have you Abraham’s faith? Then let God be true if Heaven should reel and earth should rock! Though the sons of men pass away like shadows and death entombs us all, the counsel of God’s heart shall stand and His Word shall endure forever!

Stagger not, my Friends, at the promise of God through unbelief! Be assured that whatever He has promised, He is able to perform!

Such reflections, though prolific of instruction, I must not tarry to pursue. I rather want to impress the scene and interpret the sentence brought before us in our text.

The scene itself suggests to us three pictures. The first picture will naturally rise up in your imagination without myattempting any graphic description of it. The old man, a kind and doting father,

bears in his hands a sharp knife, and hot blazing coals of fire. The younger man, perhaps twenty-five–so Josephus thinks–possibly 33 years of age and, if so, very manifestly the type of Christ, who was about that age when He came to die. The young man comes toiling up the side of the hill, bearing a load of wood upon his back. He knows that that wood is destined to burn some victim, for his father carries the fire and the knife. He understands that they are about to worship God yonder in the most solemn manner by a sacrifice of blood. On the way he puts but one question, marveling where the victim can be. He sees the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb? he asks. Abraham tells him with a bursting heart, that–

GOD WILL PROVIDE HIMSELF A LAMB.

Little did Isaac think that he was to be that lamb! They came to the spot. No doubt Abraham there tells Isaac what God had bid him do. The young man is strong–the old man has lost some of his youthful vigor. If that young man chose to struggle, the intent would be frustrated. But he, like his father, is ready to say to that Sovereign command of God, "Here I am." He allows himself to be bound by his aged sire, no, helps to put himself upon the altar! And there he lies, a willing victim, cheerfully consenting to be bound, willing then and there to die at God's command!

Here you have a picture of the Almighty One, whom we every day address as, "Our Father, who are in Heaven." Yousee His son, His only Son, whom He loves. His Isaac, who has filled His heart

with gladness. He bears upon his back the load of wood–the Cross–no, heavier than the Cross is the load which the antitype of Isaac, our blessed Jesus, bears–the sin of all His people lay heavy upon His shoulders. He turns upwards to the hill of Calvary and there, in that thick darkness, through which no human eye could peer, however much it might desire it, God, the eternal Father, binds His Son! He cheerfully submits Himself to be fastened to the tree. The Omnipotent hand unsheathes the knife to slay His Son, and draws not back, but in Sovereign Vengeance slays Him! That picture of Abraham–the knife in his hand, about to execute Isaac–presents to you a picture of the God of gods about to smite His only-begotten Son upon Mount Calvary!

Beloved, the one point an which I wish to concentrate your attention is the emotion of the Father. Oh, what grief,what love, what pity! What stern resolve and strong affections must have striven together in Abraham's bosom! We read an ancient story of a father whose two sons were taken prisoners. They were both condemned to die. The old man appeared on the scene to offer up his life–all that he had to offer–and to die, himself, if his sons' lives might be spared. For some reason the soldiers, melting to pity, went as far as they could, and told him he might have whichever of his sons he chose to be spared for the ransom. He looked first at one, and then at the other. He would gladly say, "Spare that one," but then they would put the other to death! And he would gladly say,

“Spare this one,” but then the other must die! And so the old man alternated between one and the other, undecided which should be released, till both were slain! History tells us of another case at the siege of Benda. A German nobleman, seeing a young man charging the hosts of the besiegers, remarked to those who stood by how valiantly he was fighting–he felt that a hero was in the camp. The enemy gathered so thickly round the warrior that at length he fell. “Give that young man a public funeral,” said the nobleman. His counsel was accepted, a charge was made, the body was rescued. But judge his surprise as he looked down upon the face of the young man and perceived it was his only son! He stood aghast for a moment, no tears could he shed–his eyes were as though they would start from their sockets–he seemed transfixed. He fell backward–his heart was broken–his soul had taken its flight. Such a surprise, such a sorrow, such a sense of the loss he had sustained overwhelmed him. In neither of these cases had the father any hand in the death of his child. The parent in each instance was passive.

Here, however, the knife must be handled by none other than the sire, and plunged into the vitals of his son. Oh, Abraham! Ah, Isaac–the tale of your trial makes my nerves tingle. But who of all the heavenly host, what angel near the Throne of God can tell of the Eternal Father, how His heart was moved, how His heart yearned! Do I speak after the manner of men? How else can I speak?

Reprove me when you can believe in a God who has no feelings, no emotions, no affections, no life, no love. Hardly could I subscribe to the dictum of theologians who pronounce God incapable of suffering! Surely He is capable of anything! He is Sovereign of all senses and sacred sensibilities! His benignant tender Fatherhood are as clear to my faith as His eternal power and Godhead! How, then, can I conceive of His putting His own Son to death without a grief that I must defer to as possible, because I cannot describe it as actual? If we may not liken ourselves to God, yet may God liken Himself to us! This He has done, otherwise had we not known Him. Can you smite your own child without feeling more anguish than you inflict? Solomon says, "Spare not for his crying"–but it is hard to keep Solomon's advice, for the crying of your child makes you weep more than he does! Yet, behold how God, full of love, His very name being Love, smites even to the death His Only-Begotten, till that Darling cries out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And this was done out of love to us! "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Oh, what love! His love is an indefinite quantity! It is expressed by an indefinite word–so! "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish,but have everlasting life." What measure or gauge can compass that wonderful affirmation–He so loved? Rude as

mysketch may be–royal, indeed–is the scene! Let it be vividly portrayed on the tablet of your memories. Let its gracious effect diffuse itself over your hearts! Oh, for such love as angels cannot know, let us reciprocate with a love intense and vehement that inflames our whole heart–

"Had we a thousand hearts to give
Lord, they should all be Yours."

Even now, with adoring gratitude, offer your homage to the Father, who gives His Son, and to that Son who cheerfully submits to plead by the altar for our sins.

A second picture rises to our view. You will remember that our Lord Jesus once said, "Abraham saw My day." When did he see it? Why, I think it must have been on this occasion! The venerable Patriarch certainly had in his son Isaac–

II. A VIVID PICTURE OF THE SON OF GOD.

When you see that his hand is stayed, you perceive at once that the portrait is not complete. A ram is caught in the thicket. This ram is caught, laid hold on, dragged out and put into the place of Isaac. So far the delineation is accurate, for the ram dies. It is really slain, even as Christ was sacrificed for us. But the vision changes its form. Isaac goes free–not so the ram! Isaac's blood still flows in his veins–not so that of the poor ram, the knife sternly severs his arteries and the blood flows out. There he is laid upon the wood, which forthwith begins to glow and smoke for a burnt offering.

Isaac gazes on himself in a burning figure–he owes his life to the victim that was presented as a substitute. Look earnestly, gaze intently, linger fondly on the picture, for it represents your own salvation! Let us take the place of Isaac–it is ours. We are children according to promise. If we, Beloved, have "fled for refuge to the hope set before us," we are saved. How we are saved you know. Because our Lord Jesus Christ, the ram of God's burnt-offering, did burn upon the altar for us, we are spared. It would baffle me to tell how Isaac felt when cords were unbound and he saw how narrowly he had escaped from death. Nor can I tell you how I felt when standing at the foot of the Cross–

"I beheld the flowing
Of my dear Redeemer's blood,
With assurance, knowing
He had made my peace with God."

How can you perish, Believer, now that Christ has died for you? There is not a cord on Isaac as you see him now. He is free. So are you, my Friend–there are no bonds on you. Most gratefully can you cry with David, "I am Your servant; and the son of Your handmaid; You have loosed my bonds." As you gather round the Lord's Table, let the thought of Substitution be fresh in your mind. He bore, that we might never bear the Divine Wrath. He drank the cup, even to its dregs, that we might never drink a drop of it. In short, He suffered Hell's torments for us, that we might never enter its gates.

My Hearers, did Christ thus suffer for you? Yes, surely, if so you are believing and depending upon Him, then He was your true and proper Substitute! Or if in His life you have no interest, then in His death you have no Redemption–and His blood shall never save you! Alas, alas, you must perish in your sins!

Pass from that scene. Inspect it more narrowly, more privately another time. Let me now unveil to you another picture. Behold the aged parent, with glistening eyes and placid brow, receiving his son, as it were, alive from the dead, when the angel stayed his hand. How joyously he cuts those cords! How they seem to leap together! I think I see them going homeward down the side of the hill to the tent where Sarah was. With what elastic step, with what grateful emotion, with what heartfelt joy they journey! And of what is this an emblem?

III. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST JESUS–and in that of the resurrection of every Believer! The Apostle Paul says that, "Abraham received Isaac from the dead in a figure." Now our Covenant God and Father has received His Only-Begotten from the dead, not merely in figure, but in reality! The morning has broken, the sun has risen on the third day. He cannot be held by the bonds of death any longer. He snaps them asunder and in incomparable beauty, the once slain Savior arises refreshed from His sleep! The stone had been rolled away by the angel. He comes out and the watchmen, in terror, fall on their faces in fright! He manifests

Himself to Mary and then to His disciples afterwards, saying, “Peace be unto you,” and in due time He ascends up to the right hand of the Majesty in Heaven. Angel hosts escort Him with trumpets' joyful sound–

“They bring His chariot from on high,
To bear Him to His Throne!
Clap their triumphant wings, and cry,
‘The glorious work is done!’”

Oh, you saints, celebrate the triumph afresh! Your Lord and Savior is risen and ascended! Isaac is not dead! He, in whom all nations of the earth shall be blessed, lives, forever lives! In Him, the Child of promise, the Seed of the woman, are you now a heritor of the blessing if you believe! In Him shall you rise again! Though your flesh shall see corruption, you shall burst the bonds of death and, because He lives, you shall live also–

“Nor does it yet appear
How great you shall be made,
Yet when you see your Savior here,
You shall be like your Head.”

Have these pictures impressed your minds? May the meditation they excite prove instructive to you! But lend me your ears while I proceed to commend to you the sweet prophetic words of Abraham.

The name of the Lord–that particular name, Jehovah-Jireh–has been the comfort of many an indigent Believer, and sustained him

under great difficulty. Sometimes it has been to him like the cake baked upon the coals, of which Elijah partook when he journeyed for 40 days. Oh, how graciously God has provided Himself a burnt-offering! The choicest Substitute for the most undeserving criminals. Lies there a wretch in Newgate for whom a royal heir would stand surety? No novelist would broach such a fiction! "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; perhaps for a good man one might even dare to die; but God commends His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." If every one of us had been left to endure the penalty of our own transgressions–had no Substitute been found to bear our sins–God would have been unimpeachably just and infinitely glorious!

The voice of our torments would have only been a deep bass note to tell the universe the terrible justice of the Most High! It could not have impeached His mercy. To find a Substitute was an act of gratuitous, undeserved Grace. Such provision was not only undeserved, but it was most unexpected. What amazement must have wrapped the sky when celestial creatures heard that a Substitute for man was found! Where? Among angels, principalities, or powers? No, but at God's right hand! The co-equal Son, Himself, becomes the Substitute for rebel man! Nor less in dignity than the brightness of the Father's Glory, and the express image of His Person, is He who takes upon Himself flesh and blood and subjects Himself to our infirmities, that He, Himself, may bear

our sins in His own body on the tree! Are we indifferent, or are incredulous, or what manner of men are we that one can talk and another can listen to so startling a fact, to so astounding a revelation without a thrilling emotion, a faltering tongue and tingling ears? Throughout eternity this will be a ceaseless wonder in Heaven, that the Creator should stoop to bear the creature's sin will never cease to be a mystery of Mercy that challenges endless admiration! God did, indeed, provide such a provision as makes His Providence startling! What a Gospel it is! Great God, will You redeem sinners at such a cost, at no less price than blood and that the blood of Immanuel? And is it so that Jehovah must veil Himself in human flesh? Must the Infinite become an Infant? Must the Omnipotent hang on a woman's breast? Must the eternal self-existent God breathe out an expiring life in ignominy and torture? Must all this be experienced by the Man who is Jehovah's Fellow? Yes. Manhood comes into such union with Deity that we cannot divide the two! There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus. Oh, what a step was this from the highest Throne of Glory to the Cross of deepest woe! Well did an Apostle say, "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." Silver and gold? What are they in comparison with this costly Sacrifice? The merest tinsel, the sweepings of dross, not worthy to be thought

of in the same minute as the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot!

St. Augustine somewhere holds a kind of controversy with himself as to whether Christ shall die or not. As if he said, "Yes, let the sinner live, but Christ must die. No, He must not die! He is far too good, too great to die! Then let the creature die. No, but we cannot let the creature perish, God's mercy would prevent that. Then He must die." Then he seems to say, "No, the price is too great. Sooner let them perish than buy them at such a price! A company of worms redeemed by the blood of the Son of God? The price is too high! Yet God paid it. Oh, let us love and bless His name!"

Though it was so costly a provision, it was the most suitable that could be devised! Who else could have borne our sins but God? No mere man could possibly have stood as the substitute for millions of the human race! He might, if innocent, himself, suffer for one, and so save one, but unless Deity should lend its unutterable perfections, it was not possible for human nature to sustain the weight of human guilt! But now by the suffering of a Man, the Law is vindicated and honored! By the personal interposition of God, sacred validity and Sovereign efficacy are imparted to the great work He has achieved. And oh, what an effectual provision it is! For the blood of Christ has saved, does save and will save millions of souls! Whatever else may be a myth, the Atonement is a

veritable fact! Whatever empty rites and worthless pretensions may be foisted on credulous men and silly women, you cannot exasperate the power of the blood of Christ! Come here, come here, you blackest, foulest, vilest of mankind! Try it and see if the crimson streams do not wash your crimson stains, and make you white as snow! Come here, you old transgressors, steeped in infamy, quivering on the brink of Hell, see if the drops of this blessed stream cannot cool your fevered brow and give your troubled conscience rest! Come here, you distracted maniacs who would gladly lay suicidal hands upon yourselves, and rush blood-red into your Maker's awful Presence, and see if, bowing down before that awful Cross, you do not hear a voice that says, "Peace. Be still. Go your way, your sins, which are many, are forgiven you." Yes, there is life in a look at the Crucified One! None shall ever look to Him in vain! Millions of spirits around the Throne of God rejoice in the efficacy of God's provision. Jehovah-Jireh is extolled today in matchless songs of human praise around the starry Throne! And here on earth we repeat their strains with glad accord–

"Dear, dying Lamb, Your precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Are saved to sin no more."

And then, once more, it is an ample provision. God has provided a ram for a burnt-offering and there is enough efficacy in that sacrifice for all that seek the ransom it supplies. I do not preach a stinted salvation, blessed be God! I have seen in my soul the vision that Zachariah saw. He saw a young man with a measuring line in his hand. “Where are you going? he asked. "To take the dimensions of Jerusalem,” he replied, “to record the breadth and the length thereof.” “Run, speak to this young man,” said the angels, “measure not the city! Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitudes of men therein.”

Some people have a strange disposition to use the measuring line and count the population, and number the souls that are saved by the precious blood of Jesus. Their estimate is commonly limited to a very few. Let us not measure it, for we know not what countless multitudes will be given to Christ for the travail of His soul. A multitude that no man can number has already been gathered! To come is a host, defying human arithmetic, that will lie marshaled there and still they muster day by day. O Beloved, this one thing we know, without entering into any vexed questions of Particular Redemption or General Redemption, there is enough in Christ for every sinner that desires salvation and comes and puts his trust in Him–enough to cleanse the vilest sin that ever disgraced humanity–enough to wash you white, though you are ever so begrimed! It is provision for the sins of all ages, of all ranks, of all conditions! The

harlot, cleansed here, becomes chaste and sings, with Rahab, the new song! The thief, washed here, becomes forgiven and is accepted in the Beloved! If you are the most abandoned of sinners and have strolled in here to gratify curiosity or to idle away an hour, let provision here to save you! With His infinite foreknowledge He has foreseen your case. You shall never find a case too hard for the Master–no sin too heinous for Him to forgive, no circumstance so extravagant in its guilt as to go beyond the Grace and the generosity which are treasured up in Christ Jesus–and the goodness and virtue flowing from His wounds!

I have painted the pictures. I have proclaimed the purpose. Let me conclude with–

IV. A POINTED QUESTION.

Since God has provided so great a Sacrifice, has He provided it for me? Am I a participator in the blood of Christ? To how many thousands of you do I speak? Let each one put the question to himself. My weak voice will soon exhaust its emphasis. Is there no echo in your conscience? What I say may drop from your memories. Let every soul among you earnestly enquire, "Have I Christ?" Give yourself a candid reply concerning yourself. Do you put your trust in Him? I do not ask you what possessions you can boast! The poor are very welcome in God's House. I do not ask you what reputation you have. The wise are not elected for their wisdom with God! The foolish and the base are not rejected for

their worthlessness! What I do ask is this, “Have you Christ for your portion?” Remember, Soul, that whoever believes in Jesus receives Him as God’s gift to his soul. Trust Christ and He is yours! Fall flat upon your face upon the promises of God in Christ! Have done with all the props on which you were known to lean, with all the pleas on which you were known to rely, with all the works of which you were known to boast! Go as you are to Christ, trust Him. To Him the Spirit of God leads every earnest, anxious seeker. If you trust Him, Heaven and earth may pass away, but the promise of Your salvation shall not fail. You shall be His in life, in death, in judgment, and all eternity, safe from Hell, secure in Heaven!

What if you struggle with all your natural feelings as Abraham did? The more simple your faith, the more sure will be your triumph! Believe in the dark and you shall soon come into the light. As soon as you believe, there are signs following. Venture today to lay your hands upon that dear head of the victim Lamb, and tomorrow I will summon you as witnesses who can testify to others that there is joy and peace in believing! “He will deliver your soul from going down into the Pit, and your life shall see the light. Lo, all these things God often works with man, to bring his soul back from the edge of the Pit to be enlightened with the light of the living!” May this be yours! Amen.

Ge 22:14 • Jehovah-Jireh

SERMON 1803

Jehovah-jireh

"And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."

Genesis 22:14

I believe that the Truth of God contained in the expression, "Jehovah-jireh," was ruling Abraham's thoughts long before he uttered it and appointed it to be the memorial name of the place where the Lord had provided a substitute for Isaac. It was this thought, I think, which enabled him to act as promptly as he did under the trying circumstances. His reason whispered within him, "If you slay your son, how can God keep His promise to you that your seed shall be as many as the stars of Heaven?" He answered

that suggestion by saying to himself, “Jehovah will see to it!” As he went upon that painful journey with his dearly beloved son at his side, the suggestion may have come to him, “How will you meet Sarah when you return home, having covered your hands in the blood of her son? How will you meet your neighbors when they hear that Abraham, who professed to be such a holy man, has killed his son?” That answer still sustained his heart–“Jehovah will see to it! Jehovah will see to it! He will not fail in His word. Perhaps He will raise my son from the dead, but in some way or other He will justify my obedience to Him and vindicate His own command. Jehovah will see to it.” This was a quietus to every mistrustful thought.

I pray that we may drink into this Truth of God and be refreshed by it. If we follow the Lord’s bidding, He will see to it that we shall not be ashamed or confused. If we come into great need by following His command, He will see to it that the loss shall be recompensed. If our difficulties multiply and increase so that our way seems completely blocked up, Jehovah will see to it that the road shall be cleared. The Lord will see us through in the way of holiness if we are only willing to be thorough in it and dare to follow where ever He leads. We need not wonder that Abraham should utter this truth and attach it to the spot which was to be forever famous, for his whole heart was saturated with it and had been sustained by it. Wisely he makes an altar and a mountain to be

memorials of the Truth which had so greatly helped him. His trials had taught him more of God–had, in fact, given him a new name for his God–and this he would not have forgotten, but he would keep it before the minds of the generations following by naming the place Jehovah-jireh.

Observe, as you read this chapter, that this was not the first time that Abraham had thus spoken. When he called the name of the place Jehovah-jireh he had seen it to be true–the ram caught in the thicket had been provided as a substitute for Isaac. Jehovah had provided. But he had, before, declared that Truth of God when, as yet, he knew nothing of the Divine action–when he could not even guess how his extraordinary trial would end! His son Isaac had said to him, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" And the afflicted father had bravely answered, "My son, God will provide." In due time God did provide and then Abraham honored Him by saying the same words. But instead of the ordinary name for God, he used the special Covenant title–Jehovah. That is the only alteration–otherwise, in the same terms he repeats the assurance that, "the Lord will provide."

That first utterance was most remarkable! It was simple enough, but how prophetic! It teaches us this Truth, that the confident speech of a Believer is akin to the language of a Prophet. The man who accepts the promise of God unstaggeringly and is sure that it is true, will speak like the Seers of old! He will see that God sees and

will declare the fact–and the holy inference which comes of it. The Believer's child-like assurance will anticipate the future and his plain statement–"God will provide"–will turn out to be literal truth! If you want to come near to prophesying, hold hard to the promises of God and you shall "prophecy according to the measure of faith." He that can say, "I know and am sure that God will not fail me in this, my hour of tribulation," will, before long, drop pearls of Divine confidence and diamonds of prediction from his lips. Choice sayings which become proverbs in the Church of God are not the offspring of mistrust, but of firm confidence in the living God!

To this day, many a saying of a man of God is quoted among us, even as Abraham's words were quoted. Moses puts it, "As it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." And we might mention many a sentence which is said unto this day which first fell from the mouth of a faithful spirit in the hour of the manifestation of the Lord. The speech of the father of the faithful became the speech of his spiritual seed for many a year afterwards and it abides in the family of faith unto this day! If we have full faith in God, we shall teach succeeding generations to expect Jehovah's hand to be stretched out.

True faith not only speaks the language of prophecy, but, when she sees her prophecy fulfilled, faith is always delighted to raise memorials to the God of Truth. The stones which were set up of old

were not to the memory of dead men, but they were memorials of the deeds of the living God–they abundantly uttered the memory of God's great goodness! Abraham, on this occasion, did not choose a name which recorded what he had done, but a name which spoke of what Jehovah had done. It is true Abraham's faith was worthy to be remembered throughout all generations, for there he believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness–and the Lord said to him, "And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have obeyed My voice."

There the Patriarch had endured the extreme test–no gold was ever passed through a hotter furnace. But true faith is always modest. From her gate, boasting is excluded by law. Abraham says nothing about himself at all, but the praise is unto God who sees and is seen. The record is, "Jehovah will provide." I like that self-ignoring. I pray that we, also, may have so much strength of faith that self may go to the wall. Little faith is very apt to grow proud when, to its own astonishment, it has worked righteousness. But strong faith so completely empties itself and so entirely depends upon the all-sufficiency of God, that when anything is achieved, it remembers nothing but the Divine hand and lays the crown where it ought to be laid. Growing in experimental acquaintance with the God of the Covenant, faith has a new song and a new name for her God and takes care that His wonderful works shall be remembered.

Note yet further, that when faith has uttered a prophecy and has set up her memorial, the record of mercy received becomes, itself, a new prophecy. Abraham says, "Jehovah-jireh–God will see to it." What was he doing, then, but prophesying a second time for future ages? He bids us know that as God had provided for him in the time of his extremity, so He will provide for all them that put their trust in Him! The God of Abraham lives! Let His name be praised and let us rest assured that as certainly as in the Patriarch's distress, when there seemed no way of escape, the Lord appeared for him and was seen in the mountain, even so shall it be with all the believing seed while time endures! We shall all be tried and tested, but in our utmost need God will see us and see to our deliverance, if we will but let faith have her perfect work and will hope and quietly wait the moment when the Lord shall be seen working salvation. The Lord is the Preserver of men and the Provider for men. I long for all of us to get this Truth of God firmly fixed in our hearts and, therefore, I shall try to show that God's provision for Abraham and Isaac typified the far greater provision by which all the faithful are delivered from death. And that God, in providing in the mountain, has given us, therein, a sure guarantee that all our necessities shall be provided for henceforth, even forever!

Consider, then, that the provision which God made for Abraham was symbolic of the greater provision which He has made for all His chosen in Christ Jesus. "Jehovah-jireh" is a text from which to

preach concerning Providence and many have been the sermons which have been distilled from it. But I take the liberty of saying that Providence, in the ordinary sense of the term, is not the first thought of the passage which should be read with some sort of reference to its connection–and the more so because that connection is exceedingly remarkable.

When Abraham said, "Jehovah will provide," he meant for us, first of all, to learn that THE PROVISION WILL COME IN THE TIME OF OUR EXTREMITY. The provision of the ram, instead of Isaac, was the significant type which was before Abraham's mind. And our Lord tells us, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it, and was glad." And, surely, if ever Abraham saw the day of Christ and was glad beyond measure, it was at that moment when he beheld the Lord providing a substitute for Isaac! At any rate, whether Abraham understood the full meaning of what he said, or not, he spoke not for himself, but for us. Every word he uttered is for our teaching–and the teaching is this–that God, in the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, made the fullest provision for our greatest needs. And from that we may infer that whatever need shall ever occur to us, God will certainly provide for it, but He may delay the actual manifestation of it until our darkest hour has come–

"Just in the last distressing hour
The Lord displays delivering power.
The moment of danger is the place

Where we shall see surprising Grace."

The Lord gave our Lord Jesus Christ to be the Substitute for men in view of the utmost need of our race. Isaac was hard pressed when God interfered on his behalf. The knife was lifted up by a resolute hand. Isaac was within a second of death when the angelic voice said, "Lay not your hand upon the lad." God provided instantly when the need pressed urgently. Beloved, was Isaac nearer to death than sinful man was near to Hell? Was that knife closer to the throat of the beloved Isaac than the axe of the executioner was near to the neck of every sinner–yes, to the neck of the whole race of man? We have so sinned and gone astray that it was not possible for God to wink at our transgressions! He must visit our iniquities with the just punishment which is nothing less than eternal death!

I constantly meet with persons under the convincing power of the Spirit of God and I always find that in their apprehension, the punishment of sin is something terrible and overwhelming. When God deals with men by His convincing Spirit, they feel that their sin deserves nothing less than the wrath of God in Hell! So it was with our race–we had altogether destroyed ourselves and were shut up under condemnation by the Law of God–and it was in that dread hour that God interposed and proclaimed a Savior for men! "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." I would to God we all felt what a dreadful thing it is to be lost, for then we would value the

provision of the Savior much more than we do now! Oh, Sirs, if no Redeemer had been provided, we might have gathered here, this morning, and if you could have had patience to hear me, all I would have been able to say would have been, "Brothers and Sisters, let us weep together and sigh in chorus, for we shall all die and, dying, we shall sink into the bottomless pit and shall abide forever under the righteous anger of God."

It would have been so with us all if a Substitute had not been found! If the gift of the loving Father had not been bestowed! If Jesus had not condescended to die in our place, we would have been left for execution by that Law of God which will by no means spare the guilty! We talk about our salvation as if it were nothing very particular! We have heard of the plan of Substitution so often that it becomes commonplace! It should not be so–I believe that it still thrills the angels with astonishment that man, when he had fallen from his high estate and had been banished from Eden and had become a rebel against God–should be redeemed by the blood of the Heir of all things, by whom the Divine Father made the worlds! When death and Hell opened their jaws to devour, then was this miracle completed and Jesus taken among the thorns was offered up a Sacrifice for us!

God not only interposed when the death of Isaac was imminent, but also when the anguish of Abraham had reached its highest pitch. The Patriarch's faith never wavered, but we must not forget

that he was a man like ourselves–and no father could see his child offered up without an inward agony which surpasses all description. The anguish of so perfect a man as Abraham–a man who intensely felt all the domestic affections as every truly godly father must feel them and who loved his son as much as he loved his own life–must have been unspeakably great. What must have been the force of faith which enabled the man of God to master himself, to go contrary to the current of human nature and deliberately to stand ready to sacrifice his Isaac? He must have been wound up to a fearful pitch of anguish when he lifted the knife to slay his son–but just then the angel stopped his hand–and God provided the ram as the substitute in the moment of his utmost misery.

Surely the world had come to a great state of misery when, at last, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, that He nor accept Him as their Redeemer till they feel that they lie at Hell's door–and until their anguish on account of sin has become exceedingly great. I remember well when I first beheld the Lamb of God who suffered in my place. I had often heard the story of His death. I could have told it out to others very correctly, but then I did not know my own pressing need–I had not come to feel the knife at my throat, nor was I about to die and, therefore, my knowledge was a cold, inoperative thing.

But when the Law had bound me and given me over to death–and when my heart within me was crushed with fear–then the sight of the glorious Substitute was as bright to me as a vision of Heaven! Did Jesus suffer in my stead outside the gate? Were my transgressions laid on Him? Then I received Him with unspeakable joy–with my whole nature accepting the good news! At this moment I accept the Lord Jesus as my Substitute with a deep, peaceful delight. Blessed be the name of Jehovah-jireh for having thought of me–a beggar, a wretch, a condemned criminal–and for having provided the Lamb of God whose precious blood was shed instead of mine!

II. Secondly, upon the mountain THE PROVISION WAS SPONTANEOUSLY MADE for Abraham–and so was the provision which the Lord displayed in the fullness of time when He gave up His Son to die. The ram caught in the thicket was a provision which, on Abraham's part, was quite unsought. He did not fall down and pray, "O Lord, in Your tenderness provide another victim instead of my son, Isaac." Probably it never entered his mind. But God spontaneously, from the free Grace of His own heart, put the ram where Abraham found it. You and I did not pray for Christ to die. He died for us before we were born and if He had not done so, it would never have entered into our mind to ask for so great a gift!

Until the Lord sought us, we did not even seek to be saved by Christ, of the fact of whose death we had been made aware. Oh, no, it is not in man, by nature, to seek a Savior–it is in God to give a Savior–and then the Spirit of God sweetly inclines the heart to seek Him, but this seeking comes not of man. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." It is ours to sin, it is God's to save. "We have turned, every one, to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Ours is the wandering, but the laying of those wanderings upon Jesus is of the Lord, alone–we neither bought it, nor sought it, nor thought it.

In Abraham's case, I believe it was an unexpected thing. He did not reckon upon any substitute for his son. He judged that he would have to die and viewed him as already dead. As for ourselves, if God had not revealed the plan of salvation by the substitution of His only-begotten Son, we would never have dreamed of it. Remember that the Son of God is One with the Father and if the Holy Spirit had not revealed the fact that the offended God would, Himself, bear the penalty due for the offense, it would never have occurred to the human mind! The brightest of the spirits before God's Throne would never have devised the plan of salvation by the sacrifice of Jesus! It was unexpected. Let us bless the Lord, who has done for us exceedingly above what we asked or even thought in giving us redemption through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ!

I may say of Christ what I could not have said of Abraham's ram, that not only was He unsought for by us and unexpected, but now that He is given, He is still not perfectly comprehended–

"Much we talk of Jesus' blood,
But how little's understood!
Of His suffering's, so intense,
Angels have no perfect sense."

I am often ready to beat upon my own breast as I study the wondrous mystery of atoning love, for it seems to me so mean a thing to be so little affected by such boundless Grace! If we fully felt what God has done for us in the great deed of Jesus' death, it might not be amazing if we were to die under the amazing discovery! "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it." The immortal God undertakes to bear death for man! The Incarnate stands in the sinner's place! The well-pleasing Son is made accursed for those who otherwise had been accursed forever! He who was above all shame and sorrow laid aside His Glory and became the "Man of Sorrows," "despised and rejected of men"! "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor."

It is more extraordinary than romance! Poets may sing their loftiest stanzas, but they shall never reach the height of this great argument. "Paradise Lost," a Milton may compose and fascinate a world with his majestic lines, but Paradise Restored by the Divine

Substitution is not to be fully sung by mortal minds! Only God knows the love of God! All the viding for our need, providing for our salvation, providing His only-begotten Son and providing Him of His own free love–unsought and undesired of men.

III. But, thirdly, we ought to dwell very long and earnestly upon the fact that for man's need THE PROVISION WAS MADE BY GOD HIMSELF. The text says, "Jehovah-jireh," the Lord will see to it. The Lord will provide. No one else could have provided a ransom! Neither on earth nor in Heaven was there found any helper for lost humanity. What sacrifice could be presented to God if a sacrifice could be accepted? Behold Lebanon, as it rises majestically toward Heaven, white with its snows! See the forests which adorn its sides! Set these all on fire and see them blaze as the wood of the altar of God. Yet, "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering." Take the myriads of cattle that roam the hills and shed their blood till you have made a sea of gore, but what of that? "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

Men may, themselves, die, but in death each man who dies only pays his own debt to Nature–there is nothing left for another. "None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." Where shall a redemption be found by which it shall be possible that the multitude of the elect shall be effectually redeemed from death and Hell? Such a ransom could only be found

by God! And He could only find it in Himself–in Him who was One with Himself–who lay in the bosom of the Father from old eternity. The provision was made by God Himself, since no other could provide. God alone could say, "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a Ransom."

But was it not singular that the Lord Jehovah should provide it? When a law has been broken and its honor has to be retrieved, it would not be judged likely that the aggrieved party should make the sacrifice! That God, against whom all the blasphemy and sin and wickedness of a ribald world was aimed–shall He Himself make expiation? Shall the judge bear the penalty due to the criminal? "Lay it on the sinner; for it is his due"–so Justice cries aloud–"Lay the penalty on the transgressor!" But if a substitute can be permitted, where can one be found able and willing to become surety for the guilty? He is found upon the Throne of God! He is found in the Majesty that is offended!

Brothers and Sisters, I am beaten down by my subject! Forgive me that I cannot speak of it as I would desire. There is no room, here, for words–it is a matter for silent thought. We need the fact of Substitution to strike us and then the Cross will grow sublimely great. In vision I behold it! Its two arms are extended right and left till they touch the east and west and overshadow all races of men! The foot of it descends lower than the grave, till it goes down, even, to the gates of Hell–while upward the Cross mounts with a

halo round about it of unutterable Glory–till it rises above the stars and sheds its light upon the Throne of the Most High! Atonement is a Divine business! Its sacrifice is infinite, even as the God who conceived it! Glory be to His name forever! It is all that I can say. It was nothing less than a stretch of Divine Love for Jesus to give Himself for our sins. It was gracious for the Infinite to conceive of such a thing, but for Him to carry it out was glorious beyond all comprehension! What shall I say of it?

I will only interject this thought here–let none of us ever interfere with the provision of God. If in our dire distress He, alone, was our Jehovah-jireh and provided us a Substitute, let us not think that there is anything left for us to provide! O Sinner, do you cry, "Lord, I must have a broken heart"? He will provide it for you! Do you cry, "Lord, I cannot master sin, I have not the power to conquer my passions"? He will provide strength for you! Do you mourn, "Lord, I shall never hold on and hold out to the end. I am so fickle"? Then He will provide perseverance for you! Do you think that after having given His own dear Son to purchase you, He will let that work fail because you cannot provide some little odds and ends to complete the work? Oh, dream not so! Dote not on such a folly! Whatever you need, poor Sinner, if you believe in Christ, the Lord's provision of a Savior in Christ warrants your believing that God will provide it!

Salvation begins with Jehovah-jireh, the Cross and the bleeding Savior. Do you think it will ever drivel down into your providing this and that? Oh, your pride! Your insane pride! You are to do something, are you? What? Yoke your little something with the Eternal God? Did you ever hear of an angel failing to perform a duty until he was assisted by an ant? Have you ever heard of God's great laws of Nature breaking down till some child's finger could supplement their force? You to help your God to provide? Get out of the way and be nothing–then shall God come in and be everything!

Sink! It is the Lord that must rise! He shall be seen in the mountain–not you! Hide yourself and let the Glory of the Lord be manifested in you. I wish that every troubled one here could catch this idea and hold it fast. Whatever you need to put away your sin. Whatever you need to make you a new creature. Whatever you need to carry you to Heaven, Jehovah-jireh, the Lord, will provide! He will see to it! Trust in Him and before long you shall see the Divine provision and Jehovah shall be glorious in yours eyes!

IV. But I must pass on. That which God prepares for poor sinners is A PROVISION MOST GLORIOUSLY MADE. God provided a ram instead of Isaac. This was sufficient for the occasion as a type, but that which was typified by the ram is infinitely more glorious! In order to save us, God provided God. I cannot put it more simply. He did not provide an angel, nor a mere man, but God Himself!

Come, Sinner, with all your load of sin–God can bear it! The shoulders that bear up the universe can well sustain your load of guilt. God gave you His Godhead to be your Savior when He gave you His Son.

But He also gave, in the Person of Christ, perfect Manhood–such a Man as never lived before–eclipsing, even, the perfection of the first Adam in the garden by the majestic innocence of His Nature. When Jesus has been viewed as Man, even unconverted men have so admired His excellence that they have almost adored Him! Jesus is God and Man, and the Father has given that Man–that God–to be your Redeemer! For your redemption the Lord God has given you the death of Christ; and what a death it was! I would that troubled hearts would more often study the story of the Great Sacrifice, the agony and bloody sweat, the betrayal in the garden, the binding of the hands, the accusation of the Innocent, the scourging, the crown of thorns, the spitting in the face, the mockery, the nailing to the tree, the lifting up of the Cross, the burning fever, the parching thirst and, above all, the overpowering anguish of being forsaken by His God!

Do you think, O Soul, that to save you, the Son of God must cry, "Lama Sabachthani!"? Do you think that to save you, He must hang naked to His shame between Heaven and earth, rejected of both–must cry, "I thirst"–and receive nothing but vinegar with which to moisten His burning lips? Jesus must "pour out His soul

unto death" that we might live! He must be "numbered with the transgressors" that we might be numbered with His saints in everlasting Glory! Was not this a glorious provision? What greater gift could be bestowed than One in whom God and man are blended in one?

When Abraham on the mountain offered a sacrifice it was called a "burnt offering." But when the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary died it was not only a burnt offering, but a sin offering, a meat offering and a peace offering–and every other kind of sacrifice in one! Under the oldest of all dispensations, before the Mosaic economy, God had not taught men the distinctions of sacrifice–but an offering unto the Lord meant all that was afterwards set forth by many types. When the venerable Patriarch offered a sacrifice, it was an offering for sin and a sweet smelling savor besides. So was it with our Lord Jesus Christ. When He died, He made His soul an offering for sin and, "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." When He died, He also offered unto God a burnt offering, for we read, "And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor."

When Jesus died, He gave us a peace offering, for we come to feast upon Him with God and, to us, "His flesh is meat, indeed; His blood is drink, indeed." One would need many a day in which to expatiate upon the infinite virtues and excellencies of Christ, in whom all perfections are sweetly hived. Blessed be His name, God

has most gloriously provided for us in the day of our need! Jehovah-jireh!

Fifthly, THE PROVISION WAS MADE EFFECTIVELY. Isaac did not die–the laughter in Abraham's house was not stifled. There was no grief for the Patriarch–he went home with his son in happy companionship because Jehovah had provided Himself a lamb for a burnt offering. The ram which was provided did not bleed in vain–Isaac did not die as well as the ram–Abraham did not have to slay the God-provided victim and his own son, also. No, the one sacrifice sufficed. Beloved, this is my comfort in the death of Christ–I hope it is yours–that He did not die in vain! I have heard of a theology which, in its attempt to extol the efficacy of Christ's death, virtually deprives it of any certain efficiency. The result of the Atonement is made to depend entirely upon the will of man and so is left haphazard. Our Lord, according to certain teachers, might or might not see of the travail of His soul.

I confess that I do not believe in this random redemption and I wonder that any person can derive comfort from such teaching. I believe that the Son of God could not possibly have come into the world in the circumstances in which He did–and could not have died as He did–and yet be defeated and disappointed! He died for those who believe in Him and these shall live! Yes, they do live in Him. I should think that Isaac, the child of laughter, was solemnly joyous as he descended the hill and went home with his father. I

think both of them tripped along with happy steps towards Sarah's house and their own loved home! And you and I, this day, may go home with the same joyousness! We shall not die, for the Lamb of God has died for us!

We shall never perish, for He has suffered in our place! We were bound on the altar–we were laid on the firewood and the fire was ready for our consuming–but no knife shall touch us, now, for the Sacrifice is offered once and for all. No fire shall consume us, for He who suffered in our stead has borne the heat of the flame on our behalf! We live and we shall live. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." This is an effectual and precious providing! I do not believe in a redemption which did not redeem, nor in an atonement which did not atone! But I do believe in Him who died in vain for none, but will effectually save His own Church and His own sheep for whom He laid down His life! To Him we will all render praise, for He was slain and He has redeemed us unto God by His blood out of every kindred and people and nation!

VI. Turn we then, sixthly, to this note, that we may well glorify Jehovah-jireh because THIS PROVISION WAS MADE FOR EVERY BELIEVER. The provision on the Mount of Moriah was made on behalf of Abraham–he was, himself, a man of faith, and he is styled the "father of the faithful." And now every faithful or believing one may stand where Abraham stood and say, "Jehovah-

jireh, the Lord will provide." Remember, however, that our faith must be of the same nature as that of Abraham or it will not be counted to us for righteousness. Abraham's faith worked by love–it so worked in him that he was willing to do all that the Lord bade him–even to sacrifice of his own dear son! You must possess a living, working, self-sacrificing faith if you would be saved.

If you have it, you may be as sure that you are saved as you are sure that you have sinned. "He that believes on Him is not condemned," because Christ was condemned for him. "He that believes on Him has everlasting life"–he cannot die, for Christ died for him. The great principle upon which our security is based is the righteousness of God which assures us that He will not punish the Substitute and then punish the person for whom the Substitute endured the penalty! It were a matter of gross injustice if the sinner, having made atonement for his sin in the Person of his Covenant Head, the Lord Jesus, should afterwards be called upon to account for the very sin for which Jesus atoned! Sin, like anything else, cannot be in two places at once–if the great God took my sin and laid it on His Son–then it is not on me any more! If Jesus bore the wrath of God for me, I cannot bear that wrath–it were contrary to every principle of a just, moral government, that a judge should cast our surety into prison and exact the penalty from him and then come upon those for whom the suretyship was undertaken.

By this Gospel I am prepared to stand or fall! Yes, by it I will live or die–I know no other! Because I believe it, I this day cry from the bottom of my heart, "Jehovah-jireh," the Lord has provided an effectual redemption for all those who put their trust in Him whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation. It is true, as it is written, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." It is true that the faith which works by love brings justification to the soul!

VII. But now I close with a remark which will reveal the far-reaching character of my text. "Jehovah-jireh" is true concerning all necessary things. The instance given of Abraham being provided for shows us that the Lord will always be a Provider for His people. As to the gift of the Lord Jesus, this is A PROVISION WHICH GUARANTEES ALL OTHER PROVISION. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Abraham learned that, for, as soon as he had slaughtered the ram, the Covenant was repeated in his ears and repeated as he had never heard it before–accompanied with an oath! God cannot swear by any greater than Himself, and so He said, "By Myself have I sworn." Thus was the Covenant ratified by blood and by the oath of God!

Oh, that bleeding Sacrifice! The Covenant of God is confirmed by it and our faith is established. If you have seen Jesus die for you, your heart has heard God swear, "Surely in blessing I will bless you!" By two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to

lie, He has given us who have fled for refuge to the hope set before us in the Gospel, strong consolation! Let us fall back on this eternal Truth, that if God has provided His own Well-Beloved Son to meet the most awful of all necessities, then He will provide for us in everything else!

Where will He provide? He will provide for us in the mountain, that is to say, in the place of our trial. When we reach the place where the fatal deed of utmost obedience is to be worked, then God will interpose. You desire Him to provide for you when you lift up your eyes and see the mountain afar off. He does not choose to do so, but in the mountain it shall be seen! In the place of the trial, in the heat of the furnace–in the last extremity Jehovah will be seen, for He will see to it and it shall become a proverb with you–"In the mountain, Jehovah shall be seen." That is to say, when you cannot see, the Lord will see you and see to your need, for His eyes are upon the righteous and His ears are open to their cry! You will not need to explain to God your difficulties and the intricacies of your position–He will see it all! Joyfully sing that revival ditty–

"This my Father knows."

As soon as the Lord has seen our need, then His provision shall be seen. You need not climb to Heaven or descend into the deep to find it–the Lord's provision is near at hand–the ram in the thicket is behind you though you see it not as yet. When you have heard God speak to you, you shall turn and see it and wonder you never saw it

before! You will heartily bless God for the abundant provision which He reveals in the moment of trial. Then shall the Lord, Himself, be seen! You will soon die and, perhaps in dying, you will be troubled by the fear of death. But let that evil be removed by this knowledge–that the Lord will yet be seen–and when He shall appear, you shall be manifested in His Glory! In the day of the revelation of the Lord Jesus, your body shall be raised from the dead and then shall the Divine provision yet more fully be discovered. "In the mount it shall be seen," and there shall God, Himself, be manifested to you, for your eyes shall behold Him and not another.

There is a rendering given to my text which we cannot quite pass over. Some read it that, "in the mount the people shall be seen"–in that mountain, in years to come, the multitude would gather to worship God. God's Presence was in the Temple which was built upon that spot! There the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord to worship the Most High! I dwell in a house not made with hands, but piled by God of solid slabs of mercy. He is building for me a palace of crystal, pure and shining, transparent as the day. I see the house in which I am to abide forever gradually growing around me. Its foundation was laid of old in eternal love–"in the mount it shall be seen." The Lord provided for me a Covenant Head, a Redeemer and a Friend–and in Him I abide.

Since then, course upon course of the precious stones of loving kindness has been laid and the jeweled walls are all around me. Has it not been so with you? By-and-by we shall be roofed in with Glory everlasting and then, as we shall look to the foundations, and the walls and to the arch above our head, we shall shout, "Jehovah-jireh–God has provided all this for me!" How we shall rejoice in every stone of the Divine building! How will our memory think over the method of the building! On such a day was that stone laid, I remember it right well–"I was sorely sick and the Lord comforted me." On such a day was that other stone laid–I was in prison, spiritually–and the heavenly Visitor came to me! On such another day was that bejeweled course completed, for my heart was glad in the Lord and my glory rejoiced in the God of my salvation.

The walls of love are still rising and when the building is finished and the top stone is brought out with shouts of "Grace, Grace, unto it!" we shall then sing this song unto the Lord–JEHOVAH-JIREH! The Lord has provided it! From the beginning to the end there is nothing of man and nothing of merit, nothing of self, but all of God in Christ Jesus who has loved us with an everlasting love and, therefore, has abounded towards us in blessing according to the fullness of His infinite heart! To Him be praise world without end! Amen and Amen! PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON–Genesis 22:1-19.HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"–426, 226, 199.

Ge 24:5-8 • No Compromise

SERMON 2047

N*o Compromise*

"And the servant said unto him, Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring your son again unto the land from where you came? And Abraham said unto him, Beware you that you bring not my son there again. The LORD God of Heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred and which spoke unto me and that swore unto me, saying, Unto your seed will I give this land, He shall send His angel before you and you shall take a wife unto my son from there. And if the woman will not be willing to follow you, then you shall be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son there again."

Genesis 24:5-8

GENESIS is both the book of beginnings and the book of dispensations. You know what use Paul makes of Sarah and Hagar, of Esau and Jacob and the like. Genesis is all through a book instructing the reader in the dispensations of God towards man. Paul says, in a certain place, "which things are an allegory," by which he did not mean that they were not literal facts but that, being literal facts, they might also be used instructively as an allegory. So may I say of this chapter. It records what actually was said and done. But at the same time, it bears within it allegorical instruction with regard to heavenly things. The true minister of Christ is like this Eleazar of Damascus. He is sent to find a wife for his Master's son. His great desire is that many shall be presented unto Christ in the day of His appearing, as the bride, the Lamb's wife.

The faithful servant of Abraham, before he started, communed with his master. And this is a lesson to us who go on our Lord's errands. Let us, before we engage in actual service, see the Master's face, talk with Him and tell Him of any difficulties which occur to our minds. Before we get to work let us know what we are at and on what footing we stand. Let us hear from our Lord's own mouth what He expects us to do and how far He will help us in the doing of it.

I charge you, my Fellow Servants, never to go forth to plead with men for God until you have first pleaded with God for men. Do not attempt to deliver a message which you have not first of all yourself received by His Holy Spirit. Come out of the chamber of fellowship with God into the pulpit of ministry among men and there will be a freshness and a power about you which none shall be able to resist.

Abraham's servant spoke and acted as one who felt bound to do exactly what his master bade him and to say what his master told him. Hence his one anxiety was to know the essence and measure of his commission. During his converse with his master he mentioned one little point about which there might be a hitch. And his master soon removed the difficulty from his mind. It is about that hitch which has occurred lately on a very large scale and has upset a good many of my Master's servants, that I am going to speak this morning–may God grant that it may be to the benefit of His Church at large!

Beginning our sermon, we will ask you, first, to THINK OF THE SERVANT'S JOYFUL BUT WEIGHTY ERRAND. It was a joyful errand–the bells of marriage were ringing around him. The marriage of the heir should be a joyful event. It was an honorable thing for the servant to be entrusted with the finding of a wife for his master's son. Yet it was every way a most responsible business, by no means easy of accomplishment. Blunders might very readily

occur before he was aware of it. And he needed to have all his wits about him and something more than his wits, too, for so delicate a matter.

He had to journey far, over lands without track or road. He had to seek out a family which he did not know and to find out of that family a woman whom he did not know, who nevertheless should be the right person to be the wife of his master's son–all this was a great service. The work this man undertook was a business upon which his master's heart was set. Isaac was now forty years old and had shown no sign of marrying. He was of a quiet, gentle spirit and needed a more active spirit to urge him on. The death of Sarah had deprived him of the solace of his life, which he had found in his mother and had, no doubt, made him desire tender companionship.

Abraham himself was old and well stricken in years. And he very naturally wished to see the promise beginning to be fulfilled, that in Isaac should his seed be called. Therefore, with great anxiety, which is indicated by his making his servant swear an oath of a most solemn kind, he gave him the commission to go to the old family abode in Mesopotamia and seek for Isaac a bride from there. Although that family was not all that could be desired, yet it was the best he knew of. And as some heavenly light lingered there, he hoped to find in that place the best wife for his son.

The business was, however, a serious one which he committed to his servant. My Brethren, this is nothing compared with the weight

which hangs on the true minister of Christ. All the Great Father's heart is set on giving to Christ a Church which shall be His Beloved forever. Jesus must not be alone–His Church must be His dear companion. The Father would find a bride for the great Bridegroom, a recompense for the Redeemer, a solace for the Savior–therefore He lays it upon all whom He calls to tell out the Gospel, that we should seek souls for Jesus and never rest till hearts are wedded to the Son of God.

Oh, for Divine Grace to carry out this commission! This message was the more weighty because of the person for whom the spouse was sought. Isaac was an extraordinary personage. Indeed, to the servant he was unique. He was a man born according to the Promise, not after the flesh but by the power of God. And you know how in Christ and in all that are one with Christ, the life comes by the Promise and the power of God and springs not of man. Isaac was himself the fulfillment of the Promise and the heir of the Promise. Infinitely glorious is our Lord Jesus as the Son of Man! Who shall declare His generation? Where shall be found a helpmeet for Him? A soul fit to be espoused unto Him?

Isaac had been sacrificed. He had been laid upon the altar and although he did not actually die, his father's hand had unsheathed the knife to slay him. Abraham in spirit had offered up his son. And you know who He is of whom we preach and for whom we preach, even Jesus, who has laid down His life a sacrifice for sinners. He

has been presented as a whole burnt-offering unto God. Oh, by the wounds and by the bloody sweat, I ask you–where shall we find a heart fit to be wedded to Him? How shall we find men and women who can worthily recompense love so amazing, so Divine, as that of Him who died the death of the Cross?

Isaac had also been, in a figure, raised from the dead. To his father he was "as good as dead," as said the Apostle–and he was given back to him from the dead. But our blessed Lord has actually risen from an actual death and stands before us this day as the Conqueror of death and the Spoiler of the grave. Who shall be joined to this Conqueror? Who is fit to dwell in Glory with this glorious One? One would have thought that every heart would aspire to such happiness and leap in prospect of such peerless honor and that none would shrink back except through a sense of great unworthiness. Alas, it is not so, though so it ought to be.

What a weighty errand have we to fulfill to find those who shall be linked forever in holy union with the Heir of the Promise, even the Sacrificed and Risen One! Isaac was everything to Abraham. Abraham would have said to Isaac, "All that I have is yours." So is it true of our blessed Lord, whom He has made Heir of all things–by whom also He made the worlds, that "it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." What a dignity will be put upon any of you who are married to Christ! To what a height of eminence will you be uplifted by becoming one with Jesus!

O Preacher, what a work have you to do today, to find out those to whom you shall give the bracelet and upon whose face you shall hang the jewel! To whom shall I say, “Will you give your heart to my Lord? Will you have Jesus to be your confidence, your salvation, your All in All? Are you willing to become His that He may be yours?” Said I not truly, that it was a joyful but a weighty errand, when you think what she must be to whom his master’s son should be espoused? She must, at least be willing and beautiful. In the day of God’s power, hearts are made willing. There can be no marriage to Jesus without a heart of love.

Where shall we find this willing heart? Only where the Grace of God has worked it. Ah, then, I see how I may find beauty, too, among the sons of men! Marred as our nature is by sin, only the Holy Spirit can impart that beauty of holiness which will enable the Lord Jesus to see comeliness in His chosen. Alas, in our hearts there is an aversion to Christ and an unwillingness to accept Him and at the same time a terrible unfitness and unworthiness! The Spirit of God implants a love which is of heavenly origin and renews the heart by a regeneration from above. And then we seek to be one with Jesus, but not till then. See, then, how our errand calls for the help of God, Himself.

Think what she will become who is to be married to Isaac? She is to be his delight–his loving friend and companion. She is to be partner of all his wealth. And specially is she to be a partaker in the

great Covenant Promise which was peculiarly entailed upon Abraham and his family. When a sinner comes to Christ, what does Christ make of him? His delight is in him–He communes with him. He hears his prayer, He accepts his praise. He works in him and with him and glorifies Himself in him. He makes the believing man joint-heir with Himself of all that He has, and introduces him into the Covenant treasure house, wherein the riches and glory of God are stored up for His chosen.

Ah, dear Friends! It is a very small business in the esteem of some to preach the Gospel. And yet, if God is with us, ours is more than angels' service. In a humble way you are telling of Jesus to your boys and girls in your classes. And some will despise you as "only Sunday school teachers." But your work has a spiritual weight about it unknown to conclaves of senators and absent from the counsels of emperors. Upon what you say death and Hell and worlds unknown are hanging. You are working out the destinies of immortal spirits, turning souls from ruin to glory, from sin to holiness–

"It is not a work of small import
Your loving care demands;
But what might fill an angel's heart,
And filled the Savior's hands."

In carrying out his commission this servant must spare no exertion. It would be required of him to journey a great distance,

having a general indication of direction but not knowing the way. He must have Divine guidance and protection. When he reached the place he must exercise great common sense and at the same time a trustful dependence upon the goodness and wisdom of God. It would be a wonder of wonders if he ever met the chosen woman and only the Lord could bring it to pass. By God's Grace, he had all the care and the faith required.

We have read the story of how he journeyed and prayed and pleaded. We should have cried, "Who is sufficient for these things?" But we see that the Lord Jehovah made him sufficient and his mission was happily carried out. How can we put ourselves into the right position to get at sinners and win them for Jesus? How can we learn to speak the right words? How shall we suit our teaching to the condition of their hearts? How shall we adapt ourselves to their feelings, their prejudices, their sorrows and their temptations?

Brethren, we who preach the Gospel continually may well cry, "If Your Presence go not with me, carry us not up from this place." To seek for pearls at the bottom of the sea is child's play compared with seeking for souls in this wicked London. If God is not with us, we may look our eyes out and wear our tongues away in vain. Only as the Almighty God shall lead, and guide, and influence, and inspire, can we perform our solemn trust. Only by Divine help shall we joyfully come back, bringing with us the chosen of the Lord. We are the Bridegroom's friends and we rejoice greatly in His joy.

But we sigh and cry till we have found the chosen hearts in whom He will delight, whom He shall raise to sit with Him upon His Throne.

II. Secondly, I would have you CONSIDER THE REASONABLE FEAR WHICH IS MENTIONED. Abraham's servant said, "Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land." This is a very serious, grave and common difficulty. If the woman is not willing, nothing can be done. Force and fraud are out of the question. There must be a true will or there can be no marriage in this instance. Here was the difficulty–here was a will to be dealt with.

Ah, my Brethren! This is our difficulty still. Let me describe this difficulty in detail as it appeared to the servant and appears to us. She may not believe my report, or be impressed by it. When I come to her and tell her that I am sent by Abraham, she may look me in the face and say, "There are many deceivers nowadays." If I tell her that my master's son is surpassingly beautiful and rich and that he would gladly take her to himself, she may answer, "Strange tales and romances are common in these days. But the prudent do not quit their homes."

Brethren, in our case this is a sad fact. The great evangelical Prophet cried of old, "Who has believed our report?" We also cry in the same words. Men care not for the report of God's great love to the rebellious sons of men. They do not believe that the infinitely

glorious Lord is seeking the love of poor, insignificant man–and to win it has laid down His life. Calvary, with its wealth of mercy, grief, love and merit, is disregarded. Indeed, we tell a wonderful story, and it may well seem too good to be true. But it is sad, indeed that, the multitude of men go their ways after trifles and count these grand realities to be but dreams.

I am bowed down with dismay that my Lord's great love, which led Him even to die for men, should hardly be thought worthy of your hearing, much less of your believing. Here is a heavenly marriage and right royal nuptials placed within your reach. But with a sneer you turn aside and prefer the witcheries of sin.

There was another difficulty–she was expected to feel a love to one she had never seen. She had only newly heard that there was such a person as Isaac but yet she must love him enough to leave her kindred and go to a distant land. This could only be because she recognized the will of Jehovah in the matter. Ah, my dear Hearers! All that we tell you is concerning things not seen as yet. And here is our difficulty. You have eyes and you want to see everything. You have hands and you want to handle everything. But there is One whom you cannot see as yet, who has won our love because of what we believe concerning Him. We can truly say of Him, "Whom having not seen, we love: in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

I know that you answer our request thus–"You demand too much of us when you ask us to love a Christ we have never seen." I can only answer, "It is even so: we do ask more of you than we expect to receive." Unless God the Holy Spirit shall work a miracle of Divine Grace upon your hearts you will not be persuaded by us to quit your old associations and join yourselves to our Beloved Lord. And yet, if you did come to Him and love Him, He would more than content you. For you would find in Him rest unto your souls and a peace which passes all understanding.

Abraham's servant may have thought–"She may refuse to make so great a change as to quit Mesopotamia for Canaan. She had been born and bred away there in a settled country and all her associations were with her father's house. And to marry Isaac she must tear herself away." So, too, you cannot have Jesus and have the world, too–you must break with sin to be joined to Jesus. You must come away from the licentious world, the fashionable world, the scientific world and from the (socalled) religious world. If you become a Christian, you must quit old habits, old motives, old ambitions, old pleasures, old boasts, old modes of thought. All things must become new.

You must leave the things you have loved and seek many of those things which you have up to now despised. There must come to you as great a change as if you had died and were made over again. You answer, "Must I endure all this for One whom I have never

seen and for an inheritance on which I have never set my foot?" It is even so. Although I am grieved that you turn away, I am not in the least surprised, for it is not given to many to see Him who is invisible, or to choose the strait and narrow way which leads unto life. The man or woman who will follow God's messenger to be married to so strange a Bridegroom is a rare bird, indeed.

Moreover, it might be a great difficulty to Rebekah, if she had had any difficulties at all, to think that she must henceforth lead a pilgrim life. She would quit house and farm for tent and gypsy life. Abraham and Isaac found no city to dwell in but wandered from place to place, dwelling alone, sojourners with God. Their outward mode of life was typical of the way of faith by which men live in the world and are not of it. To all intents and purposes Abraham and Isaac were out of the world and lived on its surface without lasting connection with it. They were the Lord's men and the Lord was their possession. He set Himself apart for them and they were set apart for Him.

Rebekah might well have said, "That will never do for me. I cannot outlaw myself. I cannot quit the comforts of a settled abode to ramble over the fields wherever the flocks may require me to roam." It does not strike the most of mankind that it would be a good thing to be in the world and yet not to be of it. They are not strangers in the world–they long to be admitted more fully into its "society." They are not aliens here with their treasures in Heaven–

they long to have a good round sum on earth and find their Heaven in enjoying it themselves and enriching their families. Earthworms as they are, the earth contents them.

If any man becomes unworldly and makes spiritual things his one object, he is despised as a dreamy enthusiast. Many men think that the things of religion are merely meant to be read of and to be preached about–but to live for them would be to spend a dreamy, unpractical existence. Yet the spiritual is, after all, the only real–the material is in deepest truth the visionary and unsubstantial. Still, when people turn away because of the hardness of holy warfare and the spirituality of the believing life we are not astonished, for we hardly hoped it could be otherwise. Unless the Lord renews the heart, men will always prefer the bird-in-the-hand of this life to the bird-in-the-bush of the life to come.

Moreover, it might be that the woman might not care for the Covenant of Promise. If she had no regard for Jehovah and His revealed will, she was not likely to go with the man and enter upon marriage with Isaac. He was the Heir of the Promises, the inheritor of the Covenant privileges which the Lord by oath had promised. His chosen would become the mother of that chosen seed in whom God had ordained to bless the world throughout all the ages, even the Messiah, the Seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head.

Perhaps the woman might not see the value of the Covenant, nor appreciate the glory of the Promise. The things we have to preach of–such as life everlasting, union with Christ, resurrection from the dead, reigning with Him forever and ever–seem to the dull hearts of men to be as idle tales. Tell them of a high interest for their money, of large estates to be had for a venture, or of honors to be readily gained and inventions to be found out–they open all their eyes and their ears, for here is something worth knowing.

But the things of God–eternal, immortal, boundless–these are of no importance to them. They could not be induced to go from Ur to Canaan for such trifles as eternal life and Heaven and God. So you see our difficulty. Many disbelieve altogether and others quibble and object. A greater number will not even listen to our story. And of those who do listen, most are careless and others dally with it and postpone the serious consideration. Alas, we speak to unwilling ears.

III. In the third place, I would ENLARGE UPON HIS VERY NATURAL SUGGESTION. This prudent steward said, “Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land. Must I bring your son again unto the land from where you came?” If she will not come to Isaac, shall Isaac go down to her? This is the suggestion of the present hour–if the world will not come to Jesus, shall Jesus tone down His teachings to the world? In other words, if the world will not rise to the Church, shall not the Church go down

to the world? Instead of bidding men to be converted and come out from among sinners and be separate from them, let us join with the ungodly world, enter into union with it and so pervade it with our influence by allowing it to influence us.

Let us have a Christian world. To this end let us revise our doctrines. Some are old-fashioned, grim, severe, unpopular. Let us drop them. Use the old phrases so as to please the obstinately orthodox but give them new meanings so as to win philosophical infidels who are prowling around. Pare off the edges of the unpleasant Truths of God, moderate the dogmatic tone of infallible Revelation–say that Abraham and Moses made mistakes and that the books which have been so long in reverence are full of errors. Undermine the old faith and bring in the new doubt. For the times are altered and the spirit of the age suggests the abandonment of everything that is too severely righteous and too surely of God.

The deceitful adulteration of doctrine is attended by a falsification of experience. Men are now told that they were born good, or were made so by their infant Baptism and so that great sentence, "You must be born again," is deprived of its force. Repentance is ignored, faith is a drug in the market as compared with "honest doubt," and mourning for sin and communion with God are dispensed with to make way for entertainments, and Socialism and politics of varying shades. A new creature in Christ Jesus is looked

upon as a sour invention of bigoted Puritans. It is true, with the same breath they extol Oliver Cromwell.

But then 1888 is not 1648. What was good and great two hundred years ago is mere cant today. That is what "modern thought" is telling us. And under its guidance all religion is being toned down. Spiritual religion is despised and a fashionable morality is set up in its place. Do yourself up tidily on Sunday–behave yourself. And above all, believe everything except what you read in the Bible and you will be all right. Be fashionable and think with those who profess to be scientific–this is the first and great commandment of the modern school. And the second is like unto it–do not be singular, but be as worldly as your neighbors. Thus is Isaac going down into Padanaram–thus is the Church going down to the world.

Men seem to say–It is of no use going on in the old way, fetching out one here and another there from the great mass. We want a quicker way. To wait till people are born again and become followers of Christ is a long process–let us abolish the separation between the regenerate and unregenerate. Come into the Church, all of you, converted or unconverted. You have good wishes and good resolutions. That will do–don't trouble about more. It is true you do not believe the Gospel but neither do we. You believe something or other. Come along. If you do not believe anything, no matter. Your "honest doubt" is better by far than faith.

“But,” you say, “nobody talks so.” Possibly they do not use the same words but this is the real meaning of the present-day religion. This is the drift of the times. I can justify the broadest statement I have made by the action or by the speech of certain ministers who are treacherously betraying our holy religion under pretense of adapting it to this progressive age. The new plan is to assimilate the Church to the world and so include a larger area within its bounds. By semi-dramatic performances they make Houses of Prayer to approximate to the theater. They turn their services into musical displays, and their sermons into political harangues or philosophical essays–in fact, they exchange the temple for the theater and turn the ministers of God into actors, whose business it is to amuse men.

Is it not so, that the Lord’s Day is becoming more and more a day of recreation or of idleness, and the Lord’s House either a house full of idols, or a political club, where there is more enthusiasm for a party than zeal for God? Ah me, the hedges are broken down, the walls are leveled and to many there is henceforth no Church except as a portion of the world, no God except as an unknowable force by which the laws of nature work. This, then, is the proposal. In order to win the world, the Lord Jesus must conform Himself, His people and His Word to the world. I will not dwell any longer on so loathsome a proposal.

IV. In the fourth place, NOTICE HIS MASTER'S OUTSPOKEN, BELIEVING REPUDIATION OF THE PROPOSAL. He says, shortly and sharply, "Beware you that you bring not my son there again." The Lord Jesus Christ heads that grand emigration party which has come right out from the world. Addressing His disciples, He says, "You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." We are not of the world by birth, not of the world in life, not of the world in object, not of the world in spirit, not of the world in any respect whatever. Jesus and those who are in Him constitute a new race. The proposal to go back to the world is abhorrent to our best instincts–yes, deadly to our noblest life.

A voice from Heaven cries, "Bring not My Son there again." Let not the people whom the Lord brought up out of Egypt return to the house of bondage. But let their children come out and be separate and the Lord Jehovah will be a Father unto them. Notice how Abraham states the question. In effect, he argues it thus–this would be to forego the Divine order. "For," says Abraham, "the Lord God of Heaven took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred." What, then, if he brought Abraham out, is Isaac to return? This cannot be. Up to now the way of God with His Church has been to sever a people from the world to be His elect–a people formed for Himself who shall show forth His praise.

Beloved, God's plan is not altered. He will still go on calling those whom He did predestinate. Do not let us fly in the teeth of

that fact and suppose that we can save men on a more wholesale scale by ignoring the distinction between the dead in sin and the living in Zion. If God had meant to bless the family at Padanaram by letting His chosen ones dwell among them, why did He call Abraham out at all? If Isaac may do good by dwelling there, why did Abraham leave? If there is no need of a separate Church now, what have we been at throughout all these ages? Has the martyr's blood been shed out of mere folly? Have confessors and reformers been mad when contending for doctrines which, it would seem, are of no great account?

Brethren, there are two seeds–the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent–and the difference will be maintained even to the end–neither must we ignore the distinction to please men. For Isaac to go down to Nahor's house for a wife would be placing God second to a wife. Abraham begins at once with a reference to Jehovah, "the God of Heaven." For Jehovah was everything to him and to Isaac, also. Isaac would never renounce his walk with the living God that he might find a wife. Yet this apostasy is common enough nowadays. Men and women who profess godliness will quit what they profess to believe in order to get richer wives or husbands for themselves or their children.

This mercenary conduct is without excuse. "Better society" is the cry–meaning more wealth and fashion. To the true man God is first–yes, All in All. But God is placed at the end and everything

else is put before Him by the base professor. In the name of God I call upon you who are faithful to God and to His Truth to stand fast. Whatever you may lose, turn not aside. Whatever you might gain, count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. We want Abraham's spirit within us and we shall have that when we have Abraham's faith.

Abraham felt that this would be to renounce the Covenant Promise. See how he puts it–"The God that took me from my father's house swore unto me, saying, Unto your seed will I give this land." Are they, then, to leave the land and go back to the place from which the Lord had called them? Brethren, we also are heirs of the Promise of things not seen as yet. For the sake of this we walk by faith and hence we become separate from those around us. We dwell among men as Abraham dwelt among the Canaanites–but we are of a distinct race–we are born with a new birth, live under different laws and act from different motives.

If we go back to the ways of worldlings and are numbered with them, we have renounced the Covenant of our God, the Promise is no longer ours and the eternal heritage is in other hands. Do you not know this? The moment the Church says, "I will be as the world," she has doomed herself with the world. When the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair and took them wives of all which they chose, then the flood came and swept them all away. So will it again happen should the world take the Church

into its arms–then shall come some overwhelming judgment and, it may be, a deluge of devouring fire.

The Covenant Promise and the Covenant heritage are no longer ours if we go down to the world and quit our sojourning with the Lord. Besides, dear Friends, no good can come of trying to conform to the world. Suppose the servant's policy could have been adopted and Isaac had gone down to Nahor's house, what would have been the motive? To spare Rebekah the pain of separating from her friends and the trouble of traveling. If those things could have kept her back, what would she have been worth to Isaac? The test of separation was wholesome and by no means ought it to be omitted. She is a poor wife who would not take a journey to reach her husband.

And all the converts that the Church will ever make by softening down its doctrine and by becoming worldly will not be worth one bad farthing a gross. When we get them, the next question will be, "How can we get rid of them?" They would be of no earthly use to us. It swelled the number of Israelites when they came out of Egypt that a great number of the lower order of Egyptians came out with them. Yes, but that mixed multitude became the plague of Israel in the wilderness and we read that "the mixed multitude fell a lusting." The Israelites were bad enough but it was the mixed multitude that always led the way in murmuring.

Why is there such spiritual death today? Why is false doctrine so rampant in the Churches? It is because we have ungodly people in the Church and in the ministry. Eagerness for numbers and especially eagerness to include respectable people has adulterated many Churches, and made them lax in doctrine and practice and fond of silly amusements. These are the people who despise a Prayer Meeting but rush to see "living waxworks" in their schoolrooms. God save us from converts who are made by lowering the standard and tarnishing the spiritual glory of the Church! No, no! If Isaac is to have a wife worthy of him, she will come away from Laban and the rest and she will not mind a journey on camel-back. True converts are never daunted by Truth or holiness–these, in fact, are the things which charm them.

Besides, Abraham felt that there could be no reason for taking Isaac down there, for the Lord would assuredly find him a wife. Abraham said, "He shall send His angel before you and you shall take a wife unto my son from there." Are you afraid that preaching the Gospel will not win souls? Are you despondent as to success in God's way? Is this why you pine for clever oratory? Is this why you must have music and architecture and flowers and millinery? After all, is it by might and by power and not by the Spirit of God? It is even so in the opinion of many.

Beloved Brethren, there are many things which I might allow to other worshippers which I have denied myself in conducting the

worship of this congregation. I have long worked out before your very eyes the experiment of the unaided attractiveness of the Gospel of Jesus. Our service is severely plain. No man ever comes here to gratify his eyes with art, or his ears with music. I have set before you, these many years, nothing but Christ crucified and the simplicity of the Gospel. Yet where will you find such a crowd as this gathered together this morning? Where will you find such a multitude as this meeting, Sabbath after Sabbath, for five-and-thirty years?

I have shown you nothing but the Cross, the Cross without the flowers of oratory. The Cross without the blue lights of superstition or excitement. The Cross without diamonds of ecclesiastical rank. The Cross without the buttresses of a boastful science. The Cross is abundantly sufficient to attract men first to itself and afterwards to eternal life! In this house we have proved successfully, these many years, this great Truth of God–the Gospel plainly preached will gain an audience, convert sinners and build up and sustain a Church. We beseech the people of God to mark that there is no need to try doubtful expedients and questionable methods. God will save by the Gospel, still–only let it be the Gospel in its purity.

This grand old sword will cleave a man's spine and split a rock in half. How is it that it does so little of its old conquering work? I will tell you. Do you see this scabbard of artistic work, so wonderfully elaborated? Full many keep the sword in this scabbard

and therefore its edge never gets to its work. Pull off that scabbard. Fling that fine sheath to Hades and then see how, in the Lord's hands, that glorious two-handed sword will mow down fields of men as mowers level the grass with their scythes. There is no need to go down to Egypt for help. To invite the devil to help Christ is shameful. Please God, we shall see prosperity yet, when the Church of God is resolved never to seek it except in God's own way.

And now, fifthly, observe HIS RIGHTEOUS ABSOLUTION OF HIS SERVANT. "If the woman will not be willing to follow you, then you shall be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son there again."

When we lie dying, if we have faithfully preached the Gospel, our conscience will not accuse us for having kept closely to it–we shall not mourn that we did not play the fool or the politician in order to increase our congregation. Oh, no! Our Master will give us full absolution, even if few are gathered in so long as we have been true to Him. "If the woman will not be willing to follow you, then you shall be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son there again." Do not try the dodges which debase religion. Keep to the simple Gospel. And if the people are not converted by it, you will be clear.

My dear Hearers, how much I long to see you saved! But I would not belie my Lord, even to win your souls, if they could be so won. The true servant of God is responsible for diligence and

faithfulness. But he is not responsible for success or nonsuccess. Results are in God's hands. If that dear child in your class is not converted, yet if you have set before him the Gospel of Jesus Christ with loving, prayerful earnestness, you shall not be without your reward. If I preach from my very soul the grand Truth of God that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will save my hearers–and if I persuade and entreat them to believe in Jesus unto eternal life–if they will not do so, their blood will lie upon their own heads.

When I go back to my Master, if I have faithfully told His message of Free Grace and dying love, I shall be clear. I have often prayed that I might be able to say at the last what George Fox could so truly say–"I am clear, I am clear!" It is my highest ambition to be clear of the blood of all men. I have preached God's Truth so far as I know it and I have not been ashamed of its peculiarities. That I might not stultify my testimony I have cut myself clear of those who err from the faith and even from those who associate with them. What more can I do to be honest with you? If, after all, men will not have Christ and His Gospel and His rule, it is their own concern.

If Rebekah had not come to Isaac she would have lost her place in the holy line. My Beloved Hearer, will you have Jesus Christ or not? He has come into the world to save sinners and He casts out none. Will you accept Him? Will you trust Him? "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Will you believe Him? Will you be

baptized into His name? If so, salvation is yours. But if not, He Himself has said it, “He that believes not shall be damned.”

Oh, do not expose yourselves to that damnation! Or, if you are set upon it–when the Great White Throne shall be seen in yonder skies and the Day of Wrath has come–do me the justice to acknowledge that I begged you flee to Jesus and that I did not amuse you with novel theories. I have brought neither flute, harp, trombone, psaltery, dulcimer, nor any other kind of music to please your ears. I have set Christ crucified before you and bid you believe and live.

If you refuse to accept the substitution of Christ you have refused your own mercies. Clear me in that day of all complicity with the novel inventions of deluded men. As for my Lord, I pray He grant me grace to be faithful to the end, both to His Truth and to your souls. Amen.

Portion of Scripture Read Before Sermon–Genesis 24.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”–166, 928, 884.

Ge 24:49 • An Urgent Request for an Immediate Answer

SERMON 2231

An Urgent Request For An Immediate Answer

"And now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left."

Genesis 24:49

THE chapter from which the text is taken bristles with points. There is a remarkable parallel between Eliezer seeking a wife for Isaac and the ministers of Christ seeking souls for Jesus. It is something more than an allegory. It is really a very instructive parable of how we are to deal for our Master with the souls of men and women. For as truly as Abraham sent his servant to seek a bride for his son, we are commissioned to search for those who

shall be brought into the Church, and at last, as the bride of Christ, sit down at the marriage feast in the Glory Land above!

You will notice how Eliezer prayed all along the way. He had no doubt in his mind as to whether God interfered in human affairs, but boldly and simply sought to know His will. Then, having presented his petition, we find him in quiet confidence holding his peace, "to wit whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not." And when success crowned his efforts, he was forward to acknowledge that the speedy fulfillment of his objective was in answer to his supplication. It was the guidance of God and not his own acuteness or wisdom, which led to such a favorable issue. Thus it is also with every true minister of the New Testament. Oh, if we do not pray for you, my dear Hearers, our preaching to you will be hypocrisy! We shall never speak to men for God with any power of persuasion unless, first, we speak to God for men with power of supplication! Not without many a prayer and many a heaving of my heart in sighs have I come here to speak to you tonight. I believe that I am sent to find out some appointed for Christ in the Divine purpose and Covenant and I pray my Master that there may be many such!

While this trusty servant thus prayed to his master's God, see how loyal he was to his master. He evidently realized that he was not on his own errand, but was the chosen instrument to do his lord's will. The phrase, "my master," is the refrain of this chapter. The word,

“master,” occurs 22 times. Eliezer did not aspire to any independence of Abraham, or of Abraham’s son. His thoughts were of his master–his words were in praise of his master–his deeds on behalf of his master. He was not his own, but the bond-servant of another. This is also our position. Woe to the minister who loses sight of the true relationship between himself and his Lord, or who begins to think of serving his own interests rather than that of Him who called and sent him! My Brothers and Sisters, we are not our own, but the slaves of Christ! May our hearts be always kept loyal to Him! May our lips constantly speak His praise! May our lives always witness to our devotion to our Lord! Nothing we have is our own–all is His–and His absolute ownership of us and ours is our highest delight!

George Herbert speaks of the “Oriental fragrance” which dwells in the words, “My Master.” It is, indeed, a name full of sweet savor and holy gladness. Even here it is Heaven to serve Him! But what will it be to see His face, when His bride is brought safely home?–

“O Jesus, You have promised
To all who follow Thee
That where You are in Glory,
There shall Your servant be!
And Jesus, I have promised
To serve You to the end.
Oh, give me Grace to follow,

My Master and my Friend.”

See how alert Eliezer was to seize the opportunity of obeying his master’s orders. His love to Abraham made him quick to carry out the commission with which he was charged. When Rebekah came to the well, he began the conversation in the same way as the Lord Jesus, long afterwards, at Jacob’s well, began to talk to the woman of Samaria. He asked her to give him a drink. The two scenes by the well might almost form companion pictures. Then he very skillfully found out her name and was invited to her father’s house as a guest. I always feel a special joy when I hear of the visit of a servant of God to a house being the means of winning some member of the household for his Master! We should always aim to make our visits a blessing to those with whom we visit. It speaks much for the consistent life of the man who is enabled to do so. If we realize that we are always on our Master’s service, we shall bear a good testimony before those with whom we come in contact, making it quite clear that we watch for souls as those that must give account–that we may do it with joy–and not with grief.

One other thing in this man is noteworthy. He meant business and went with unerring aim straight to the mark. He had not many purposes, but only one. He did not go there for anything else but to find a wife for Isaac. And when he got into pretty comfortable quarters and had been called, by Laban, “the blessed of the Lord,” he was not satisfied. He meant business and would not even eat the

meat set before him until he had explained his errand. Like every true servant of Christ, he put his Master's business before his own ease or comfort–even before the question of necessary food. When a man begins to think more of his eating than of doing the will of God, he ceases to be a true-hearted minister! Let us imitate the thoroughness of Abraham's servant in this matter. He told Bethuel and Laban what he came for and, before he finished his address, he turned to them and said distinctly, "Now, what answer do you mean to give to my master's message? I cannot be kept in suspense. If you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me. And if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left."

Notice, first, that HE STATED HIS CASE. You must not expect men to come to a decision upon a matter which has not been laid before them. Our good young Brother who goes into the pulpit and cries, "Believe, believe," but does not tell his hearers what is to be believed, has not accomplished much! You cannot ask people to buy if you have no goods to show them. But Eliezer opened his pack, exposed his wares and sought, at once, to do business on his master's account. What did he say to his interested listeners?

To begin with, he told them that his master was great and gave them some idea how rich he was, for he went over the list of his possessions–his flocks and herds, his silver and gold, his camels and asses, his menservants and maidservants. Thus did he commend his master, as I would also seek to commend mine.

Language fails me to speak of His greatness! This world is His and all the worlds that He has made. “The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the Lord of Hosts.” He lays claim to all things in the earth, animate and inanimate. “Every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.” None other can be mentioned beside Him. “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand and meted out Heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?” So great is He that all other things are small compared with Him. “Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He takes up the isles as every little thing.” Is He not a glorious Master to serve? “How great is His goodness and how great is His beauty!”

Having first spoken of his master, he told them that his master’s son was his heir. That was a very important point in the business. And he spoke about how his master had put all that he had into the hands of his son–that the promises were his and that the inheritance would come to him. He called the son, “master,” equally with the father. I also desire to glorify God and to magnify Christ Jesus, His Only-Begotten and Well-Beloved Son. It is the Father’s will “that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.” He is His Father’s heir–He claimed the title in His parable of the wicked

husbandmen. When we come on our Master's business, we seek those who shall become "heirs of God, and jointheirs with Christ."

This is the third point with Eliezer–he wanted one who would leave her home and go and be one with his master's son. He said that his master's son needed a wife and he had come to seek one for him. He needed one who would be willing to go on a long and venturous journey and be a pilgrim in a strange land with her husband. He would have no other than one who would give herself up to the God of Israel and take a full share with Isaac in the Covenant blessing. Well, now, that is my case, too. The Lord God, the Creator of Heaven and earth, has all manner of good things to bestow upon the sinful sons of men. There is no measuring the Grace and love of God and He would have you to be His people that He may be your God. He wants those who will be willing to leave all and be united to His Only-Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus, who for our salvation came down from Heaven and took our nature, and lived in it–who took our sin and died for us–that we might be pardoned and forever saved. The Son must see of the travail of His soul. There must be souls that shall be eternally saved through believing on Him. He cannot die in vain! He must have a people who shall be to Him a bride, with whom He shall delight Himself forever and ever. And the question is, are there any such here? Are there any here who will yield themselves to His sweet love, who will trust themselves with Him, as Rebekah trusted

herself with Isaac–who will come out of the world–and live the separated life with Him? This is the errand on which we have come.

And Eliezer added that he hoped that he had found the right person. He believed that it was Rebekah, for he had put it before God in prayer–and in answer to his prayer she had come. She had done exactly as he had laid it down in prayer that she should do. Now, I have a hope dancing in my heart that I have, on this occasion, found the right person. I often wonder why some people are here. There has come into the Tabernacle on the Lord's-Day, many a time, a runaway from his father's house in the country. He has come to London to sin and he has little thought that he came to London to be saved–but here the Word of God has laid hold upon him! There has dropped in here a sailor who had only been a day or two in port, and the last thing that he ever thought was that he should be converted! But here he came and found eternal life! Your coming here in such numbers and your eyes, as you look at me, encourage me, while your willingness to hear what I have to say inspires me to fearlessly deliver my Master's message! Surely God means to bless you! If He gives the hearing ear, will He not give the broken heart? And if He has led you to be anxious to listen to my message, are you not, many of you, the very persons whom He has appointed to be forever united to His beloved Son?

The case being thus faithfully stated by Eliezer, he now pressed for a reply. “If you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me. If Rebekah will go with me to be the wife of Isaac, tell me.” So I put it to you. If you are willing to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and are ready to leave the world and all its temptations and come to Him, say so! Tell me. Let us know if you have now come to a turning point. You remember how the Roman ambassadors demanded of some who came to them that they should, on the spot, decide whether they meant war with Rome or submission to it? When they asked for time, the ambassadors drew a circle round them, and said, “Before you exit that circle, you must settle whether it is to be peace or war.” I would draw, here, a circle round some of you and say, “Your portion must be either salvation or damnation. You have already been hesitating and halting too long. Do not leave that seat till you have decided, one way or the other.”

There is, just under the dome of St. Paul’s Cathedral, a spot which I once had pointed out to me–it must have been 40 years ago–where a workman, busily engaged at the top of the dome, fell, and, of course, was dashed to pieces on the floor. And I saw the mark of his chisel on the place where he was killed. I wonder whether there are any marks in these pews where souls were lost, where some have parleyed with God, refused His Grace, resisted His Spirit and gone thenceforth the downward road? I would to God that, instead thereof, there might be some mark where the Grace of God has

worked effectual salvation! I believe there is not a single pew or seat in the aisles in this place, that might not legitimately be marked as a place where souls have been saved, for, time out of mind, when friends come here and speak on Monday nights, you must have noticed how one of them says, “The third seat from that pillar over yonder was the place where I sat when the Light of God came.” And another says, “Christ found me in a back seat in the top gallery,” and so on, until they have pointed to almost every part of the building as the place where God has called someone by His Grace! I hope that some of you are now sitting in the very spot where you are predestinated to be born again unto everlasting life!

II. In the second place, it is clearly set before us, that when Eliezer had stated his case, HE WISHED TO HAVE A FAVORABLE REPLY. I might almost say he expected it. After his wonderful guidance and his hospitable reception, his hopes would rise high that his quest would be speedily brought to a satisfactory end.

If a favorable reply was given to him, it would enable him to execute his errand. Whereas, if the answer was against him, he could not, then, carry out his master’s orders. If no soul gets saved through this discourse, I cannot carry on my business. “Oh, well,” says one, “a man may preach very faithfully and yet he may have no souls saved.” Yes, a fisherman may fish and never catch any fish, but he is not much of a fisherman, and so, if there were no

souls saved, perhaps I might find some way of satisfying my conscience, but it is unknown to me as yet! I have never sought such a solace and hope I never shall. With me it is, “Give me children, or else I die.” If you are not saved and brought to Christ, I feel as if I must give up my work of preaching to you. I cannot stand here beating the air. If my hearers are not converted, I have lost my time–I have lost the exercise of brain and heart! I feel as if I had lost my hope and lost my life unless I find for my Lord some of His blood-bought ones–and I must find some of them by this sermon!

I think that Eliezer longed for a favorable reply because it would be an answer to his prayer. Possibly you have not prayed for yourself, but we have prayed for you–not that we know your name, or your case–but we have often gone over in secret a case just like yours, and we can say that we have brought you before God in earnest supplication. And perhaps there are godly people at home who are praying that as you are here, you may get a blessing. I frequently see people who come to join the Church and they say, “My husband is not converted,” or, “My daughter is not converted.” “Do you get them to come and hear the Word?” I ask. “Oh, yes, Sir, they come and hear!” “Well,” I have said, “if you get them into the battle, where the shots are flying, they are very likely to be wounded.” So we have often prayed that when some of you have been persuaded to come and hear the Word of God, the Spirit

of God may get hold of you and that you may fall wounded beneath His sharp sword, or receive an arrow between the joints of the harness!

The principal reason, however, why this good man wanted to find a willing response about Rebekah was because it would gladden his master's son. "Oh," he thought, "what joy I shall give him if I take back to him the right woman, the wife whom God has appointed for him! He has lost his mother, Sarah, and he is pining and grieving. But if I can take him back one who will fill her place in his tender heart, I shall rejoice." As for us, our one business is to make glad the heart of Christ! His heart was pierced with a spear after having been broken with great anguish–and there is nothing that will refresh Him like a soul yielding itself to His care. Who will do that here? Are there any in this house who are now saying, "I will belong to Christ from this time forth. I will trust Him, for He loved me, and gave Himself for me"? Happy messenger, to stand here and tell His story, and to say, "My Lord is waiting for you in the far country. He has sent me to invite you to share with Him all that He has! If your heart is willing to take Him, He gives Himself to you."

His only complaint is, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." And His declaration is, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Any, "him" that comes to Him, He will receive and bless! Eliezer was quite sure his master would deal

tenderly and truly with Rebekah, therefore he asked her father and brother to “deal kindly and truly” with him. I am quite sure that my Master will deal “kindly and truly” with you–He could not do otherwise! If you but knew His heart, or had a glimpse of His beauty, you would hesitate no longer. Will you not give Him a favorable answer, and say, “Yes, we will deal kindly and truly with your Master, and will yield our hearts to Him at once and forever”?

I think, too, that Eliezer had begun to feel that it would be for Rebekah’s benefit to go to his master. He had seen her face at the well. He liked the style of the young woman and he thought, “If I can get her for Isaac, she will be settled in life; she will be the mistress and queen of a great household; she will have a happy husband and all that her heart can desire.” As I think of some here who have never found peace, I say to myself that if I could only get you to Christ, how happy you would be! If you would come and trust Him, your everlasting fortune would be made. If you would yield yourselves to Him, there would be an end of sin, an end of doubt, an end of fear and an end of terror. You would be saved! Your morality, which is now so precarious, would rise into a solid spirituality, for you would be made holy through the indwelling Spirit. Seeing that this would be the case, could I do you a better turn than to lead you to Jesus?

John B. Gough tells a story of how he was fetched from a railway station to speak. one night, and the cab that was sent for him had a

broken window. He noticed that the man who came in the cab put a handkerchief over his head as he sat close up against the hole in the window–and then he observed that he put his head against the window. Mr. Gough said, “Have you a cold in your head?” “No,” he said, “but there is a nasty hole in this pane of glass and I am afraid that you may take cold. I am sticking my head into the hole to shield you, for you taught me to be a man and a Christian.” Such gratitude as that was most touching–and if we can bring any to Christ, I am sure they will be very grateful to us. If we can lead them to Jesus, they will feel as if they could not do too much for us. therefore out of love to them, having so many who are now our dear children in Christ, we would plead with them, and say, “Give us a good answer and say ‘Yes’ to the overture of our Master’s Son.”

III. But now the point of the text is that HE WAS DETERMINED TO HAVE AN ANSWER. He says, “If you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me.” He would have their answer, whether it was, “Yes,” or, “No.” “If not, tell me.” May I ask that everyone here will say, “Yes,” or, “No,” to the invitation to give himself up to Christ? If you will do so, say, “I will.” If you will not do so, say deliberately, “I will not.” I wish I could get hold of an undecided man and, taking his hand, could say to him, “Now, you must tell me which it will be.” I can imagine some of you would say, “Oh, give me time to consider!” and I would reply,

“You have had time to consider. Your hair is getting gray.” In spite of all our entreaties, people say, “Oh, but I do not like to decide so suddenly!” If I asked you whether you would be honest, I hope that you would not take many minutes to answer that! Why, then, should you hesitate so long in giving your adherence to Christ? I am like Abraham’s servant–I must have an answer!

But can we rightly press men to decide if we fear that they will answer, “No”? I think we may, because, from the nature of the case, no answer means a denial. How many of our hearers have thus, for years, turned their back upon Christ by the simple method of giving no answer at all? “We hear what you say, Sir,” they murmur, “and thank you for saying it,” but, nevertheless, they go out and go on their way–and forget what manner of men they are! Such a response is a refusal–and it is none the less a refusal because you will probably retort, “But I did not say, ‘No,’ Sir. Indeed, one of these days I may, perhaps, say, ‘Yes.’” But, meanwhile, you reject the proposal and refuse to give yourself up to the Lord! The question is, Will you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? The absence of an affirmative answer means, “No, I will not.” I am sure that it does in every case. No argument can be raised about that.

But if you will answer me, “No, I will not have Christ. I will not believe on Him. I will not become a Christian. I will not leave my old ways–I mean to go on in them,” well, I thank you for the

answer, pained as I am, because now we can talk it over! This is better than no response, for now we have something to work upon. An ill answer can be considered, while no answer baffles all our efforts to help you! It is far more hopeful to encounter opposition than to meet with indifference. It is a great thing, when a ship is at sea, for the captain to know whereabouts he is–and when we meet with those who distinctly reject Christ–we at once know our bearings. If you say, "No, I am not a Christian and I do not want to be," so far you are honest and I need you, now, to think it over.

Would you like to die in this frame of mind? You may die where you are sitting! Are you wise to come to this determination? Do you think that this is a resolution which you can justify before the judgement bar of God? You will certainly have to appear there! After death you will rise again when the trumpet of the archangel sounds and, as surely as you are here, you will have to stand before the Great White Throne whereon Christ will sit as Judge! How will the resolution which you have now made stand the light of that tremendous Day? I pray you, think of it, and I hope that you will alter your decision as many another man has done when he has calmly considered the magnitude of the issues at stake and the awful result which must come of rejecting Him who is now the Savior, but who will one day sit as the Judge!

But we are the more determined to press you for some decision because an ill answer will set us free to go to others. You see,

Eliezer says, “If not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left.” Do not suppose that if you refuse Christ, He will lose the effect of His death! “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.” If you will not come unto Him, others will. If you reject Him, He has a people who will accept Him, by His almighty Grace. O Sirs, if you that hear the Gospel will not have my Master, we will go and bring in the publicans and harlots–and they shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven before you! Sons of pious parents, children of Sunday schools, if you believe not, you shall be cast into “outer darkness” where shall be “weeping and gnashing of teeth”–while the people whom you despise–infidels and profligates, the very scum of society, shall accept the Savior and live!

Oh, I charge you, think not that your refusal of the Gospel invitation will leave any gaps in the ranks of the redeemed! Our Savior, in His parable of the marriage of the king’s son, foretold what will happen. The king said to his servants, “The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go you, therefore, into the highways and as many as you shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.” But I would urge you to yield yourself unto the Lord, that you may be found at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Do not trifle with eternal matters! If

you want to play the fool, do it with counters or with pebbles, but not with your soul that shall live forever in bliss or in woe!

My importunity with you is strengthened when I think that, perhaps, if you give me the answer straight out, "No, I am not a Christian and I do not mean to be one," you may, in saying it, see more clearly what a terrible decision you have arrived at. An ill answer may startle you and ultimately lead you to repent of your folly and reverse your decision! If you would write down–"I am not a Christian and I never mean to be one," it might startle you still more. I challenge you to do so! And when it is written, put it over the mantelpiece and look at it. It will be far better to do that, horrible as it is, than to continue in this state of wicked suspense, indifferent as to whether you are lost or saved, undecided whether you are for Christ or against Him and yet, in your heart of hearts, dead in trespasses and sins! In this very place, I once urged those who were undecided to go home and write down, either the word, "Saved," or, "Lost," and sign their name to the paper. One man, when he got into his house, asked for pen and paper. And when his wife enquired why he wanted it, he said he was going to do what the parson said and write down, "Lost." She refused to fetch him the paper if he was going to do that.

So he got it himself and put down a capital L. At that time his little girl climbed up in the chair behind him and said, "No, father, you shan't do that! I'd rather die than you should do that"–and the

child's tears fell on his hand as she spoke. What my sermon had failed to do, those tears accomplished! The strong man was bowed and yielded himself to Christ–and when they got up from their knees in that little room, he took the pen, and changing the L into an S, wrote "Saved." He was saved because he came face to face with the fact that he was lost! His ill answer startled both himself and his child! May God work the same change in you, both for your own sake and also for the sake of your loved ones!

I want to press you for some kind of answer because, like Eliezer, I have promised my Master to make a search for you and an ill answer will clear me of my oath. If I can get a, "No," from you as your answer, and am certain that you will not go with me to my Master's Son, I shall be clear. It was so with Abraham's servant–he and his master agreed to that at the first. When men say, "No," and entreaties are of no further use, and the preaching of the Gospel has no power over them, then we must leave them and carry the glad tidings to others, just as Paul and Barnabas of old said to the angry Jews at Antioch, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you put it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." I beseech you, do not put Christ away from you! And I press you for a definite answer. I say, as Eliezer said, "If you will deal kindly and truly with my Master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left."

Now I want to have a little talk with you over this matter. My dear Friend, you are in peril of eternal death. While you are hesitating, life is ebbing. During the past few months, how many of our dear friends have been taken away by influenza and other causes! This congregation has suffered from sickness, in family after family, as I never knew it suffer before! May you not be taken? I charge you, therefore, do not act as though you had plenty of time. Possibly you have not another week to live! The clock, as it ticks, seems to me to say, "Now, now, now, now, now, now." And for some of you, there is an alarm in the clock, which, when it runs down, utters this warning, "Now or never, now or never, now or never."

After all, the matter that we have in hand is not one that requires great debate! Whether I will believe the Truth of God or not should not be a matter of discussion. Whether I will receive the gift of God or not should not be a thing to be argued about if I am in my right mind! Whether, being lost, I am willing to be saved–whether, having the Gospel of eternal life proclaimed to me, I should accept it by faith–well, I need not ask the sages as to what I shall answer, nor need I go to the Law Courts to consult the judges as to my reply! This is a thing so simple that it requires no argument! Who will choose to be damned? Who will refuse eternal life? Surely these are questions that should be decided at once!

Waiting and trifling have done you no good up to now. The countryman, when he wanted to cross the river, and found it deep, said that he would sit down and wait till the water was all gone by. He waited, but the river was just as deep after all his waiting! And with all your delay, the difficulties in the way of your accepting Christ do not get any less. If you look at the matter rightly, you will see that there are no great difficulties in the way, nor were there ever such obstacles as your imagination pictures.

Another countryman, having to cross Cheapside one morning, was so confused by the traffic of omnibuses and cabs and foot passengers that he said he felt sure he could not get across the road and would wait till the people thinned out a little. But all day long they never did thin out. Unless he had waited till the evening, he would have found little difference in that perpetual stream of hurrying people. O Friends, you have waited until you can get "a convenient season" to become a Christian and, after all your delay, the way is not any clearer! Twenty years ago some of you were as near decisions for Christ as you are now. No, you seemed nearer! I then thought, "Oh, some of them will soon believe in Jesus and yield their hearts to Him!" But you said, then, that it was not quite time. Is it time now? Is the day without difficulty any nearer? Is the season any more suitable? No, indeed, there is no improvement!

Let me say that I believe that your waiting has not only done you no good, but has positively done you great harm! There were times

when it seemed easy for you to yield to the pressure of the Divine Spirit. It certainly is not easier now. Indeed, it is more difficult. I think sometimes God treats men as Benjamin Franklin treated the man who stood loafing in his bookshop and, at last took up a book and asked, “How much is this?” Franklin replied, “A shilling.” “A shilling?” Franklin said, “a shilling.” And he would not give the price. After staying about 10 minutes, he said, “Come, Mr. Franklin, now what will you take for it?” Franklin answered, “Two shillings.” “No,” he said, “you are joking!” “I am not joking,” said Franklin, “the price is two shillings.” The man waited and sat a while, thinking. “I want the book,” he drawled out, “still, I will not give two shillings. What will you take for it?” Franklin said, “Three shillings.” “Well,” the man said, “why do you raise your price?” To which Franklin responded, “You see, you have wasted so much of my time that I could better have afforded to take one shilling at first than three shillings now.”

Sometimes, if men come to Christ at the very first invitation, it is a sweet and easy coming. See how dear young children often yield themselves to Christ and how peaceful is their entrance into the rest of faith! But when people wait. When they postpone believing. When they violate conscience. When they tread down all the uprising of holy thoughts within them, it becomes much harder for them to trust in Christ than it would have been when He was first preached to them. I come, therefore, to you, again, and say, “If you

will deal kindly and truly with my Master, tell me. And if not, tell me, and tell me now."

"Well," says one, "I am glad you have spoken to us. I will think it over." No, Friend, I do not mean that. I do not want you to think it over. You have had enough of thinking! I pray that God's Spirit may lead you to an immediate decision. "Well, suppose that we consider it during the week?" you ask. No, that will not suit either my Master or myself. I want the answer now. I am like a messenger carrying a letter on which is written, "The bearer will wait for a reply." I was once in a country town and I said to my host, when I went to bed, "I have to be in London tomorrow and I cannot get up in time for my work unless I leave by a train which I can catch readily enough if you wake me at six o'clock." Well, my host was an Irishman, so he woke me at five o'clock. And when I sat up in bed, I said, "What time is it?" He said, "You have only another hour to sleep."

The consequence was that I missed my train. If He had only wakened me at the proper time and said, "Now you must get up," I would have dressed at once, but as he said, "You have only another hour to sleep," of course I slept that hour and another one as well, for I was weary. The same principle applies to you. If I say to you, "Go home and think it over all the week," I shall be giving you a week in which to remain in rebellion against God! And I have no right to do that. I shall be giving you a week in which you are to

continue an unbeliever–and he that is an unbeliever is in peril of eternal ruin, for, “He that believes not shall be damned.” Worse than all, the week may lead to many other weeks–to months, perhaps, and years–perhaps to a whole eternity of woe! I cannot give you five minutes! God the Holy Spirit speaks by me, now, to souls whom God has chosen from before the foundation of the world! And He says, “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” The Holy Spirit says, “Today, even today.” “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?” The question comes to you, Will you be Christ’s? “If you will deal kindly and truly with my Master, tell me: and if not, tell me.”

The best answer you can give is in the verses that follow the text. “Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceeds from the Lord: we cannot speak unto you bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before you; take her.” Oh I wish some of you would thus respond to my appeal this day! This thing is also from the Lord–it was He who gave me this message–it was He who brought you to hear it! Surely you will not be found fighting against God! Your heart is open to Him–He sees the faintest desire that you have toward Him. Breathe out your wish, now, and say, “My heart is before You–take it.”–

“Take my poor heart, and let it be
Forever closed to all but Thee!

Seal You my breast and let me wear

That pledge of love forever there."

He will not be slow to accept that which is offered to Him! He will take you now and He will keep you forever!

"How is it to be done?" says one. The plan is very simple. Jesus Christ took upon Himself the sins of all who ever will trust Him. Come and rest upon His atoning Sacrifice. Give yourself up to Him wholly and unreservedly and He will save Christ to save me. I believe that the act of faith was very well set forth in the statement of a poor imbecile. They said that he was an idiot, but I think that he had more real sense than many a man who boasts of his intellect. Someone said to him, "John, have you got a soul? "No," he said, "I ain't got no soul." "Why, John, how is that?" He replied, "I had a soul once, but I lost it, and Jesus Christ found it, so I have just let Him keep it." There is the whole philosophy of salvation. You have lost your soul. Christ has found it! Let Him keep it! God bless you! Amen. PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON–Genesis 24.HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"–508, 670, 568, 658.LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR READER–This sermon is an urgent appeal to the undecided. And if you are in that condition, I would by this letter press the suit home in the most personal manner. I am a sick man who has narrowly escaped the hand of death and I feel that the things of eternity ought not to be trifled with. To be saved at the

last, our wisdom is to be saved at once. If I had left my soul's matters for a sick bed, I could not have attended to them there, for I was delirious and the mind could not fix itself sensibly upon any subject. Before the cloud lowers over your mind, give your best attention to the Word of the Lord. I beseech you, dear Reader, to do this, for you cannot tell how soon the hour of life may end.

It has been life to me to hear of souls saved by God's Grace through these sermons and I am praying the Lord to give me a deep and long draught of this heart-reviving joy, by causing me to hear that this discourse is made to thousands the means of life from the dead! It is a large request, but the Lord has said, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." Thus would I open my mouth in prayer for you, dear Reader, and thousands like you. Do you not, in your heart of hearts, desire that the Lord would hear His servant's petition? Yours to serve as strength returns, Mentone, November 14, 1891 C. H. SPURGEON.

Ge 24:55 • Delay is Dangerous

SERMON 0772

D*elay Is Dangerous*

"And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at least ten; after that she shall go."

Genesis 24:55

You know the story of which these words form a part. Abraham was anxious to secure a wife for his son, Isaac. He sends, therefore, his well-tried servant to the land of their forefathers and takes an oath of him that he will bring a maiden from there who should be, by her birth and character, suitable to her future destiny. The venerable servant departs on his delicate and difficult errand. He took all precautions and then commended his case to the wise disposal of his own and his master's God. Success, which was in

perfect harmony with his faith and with the Divine promises, at once crowned his efforts. The maiden best adapted above all others to be the spouse of Isaac is sent to meet him. She immediately responded to his wishes and conducted him to the house of her brother.

The aged man was wise in his generation, and knew that a key of gold has the power to open the heart most tightly locked either by prejudice or pride–everything gives way before its subtle influence. He had calculated wisely and his plans are matured at once into all he had fervently desired and prayed for. No sooner had Abraham's servant exhibited his offerings–jewels of silver and gold, with earrings and bracelets of precious metal–then he at once won the consent of Laban, Rebekah's brother, and of her mother. For what would not Laban have agreed to do for the sake of such valuable things?

The good servant, therefore, when he went to his bed that night, might well have slept soundly, congratulating himself that he had found in his anxious mission an easy task–that he should be able to go back the next morning to his master, taking Rebekah with him–and that the whole matter would be carried through with surprising speed. Judge of his surprise when, the first thing Laban said in answer to the good man's request, "Send me away," was, "Oh no, we cannot afford to let you go just yet. We must have the damsel here a little while longer, ten days at least."

I do not know what may have been Laban's particular reason, but I suspect his motives were in keeping with his character. If you observe his subsequent conduct with regard to Jacob, you may rest assured that there was something in the background. He thought, perhaps, that there were more golden bracelets to be had–that he was parting with his sister rather too cheaply, that he must not let the priceless gems go out of his hands too soon–therefore he would keep the account open and bargain some more.

Or, if he could not get more out of the servant, he might at least get ten days more service from the maiden, for she appears to have been the keeper of the sheep of the household, and to have performed the usual menial duties attended to by the young women of the family in the East. So Laban may have thought he might as well have her for ten days longer. It was just like he–he would have as much as he ought to have, and as much more as he could get–that was his honesty. He would get all that it was possible to squeeze out of everybody–that was his generosity. We shall not, however, have anything more to do with Laban tonight than to use his desire to retain his good sister, Rebekah, as an illustration of the way in which this wicked world endeavors to meet the invitations of the Gospel–by trying to retain the awakened sinner a little longer in its grasp.

I believe there are many here who have a hope that one day or other they will be saved. They have consented, in their judgment,

that it is a right thing to be converted, but not yet. The world says, "Yes, these are weighty considerations. You shall go with that Man. You shall have Christ–you shall put your trust in Him–but not yet! Stop just a little while." Satan's last counsel to his servants seems to have been, "Do not openly oppose the Gospel. Give way to it, but suggest delay–do not set men's consciences in opposition to Gospel Truth, for that is a hammer, and perhaps it will break their rocky hearts to pieces–but tell them to yield to the hammer. Tell them to say, 'Yes, yes, it is all true, quite correct. But we must wait a little longer, at least ten days. There is plenty of time. There is no need to hurry. Let the damsel wait a little while, ten days at least.' "

I want to draw your attention, first of all, to the world's pretext for this delay. I stand knocking tonight at the world's door, and I say, "There is a young heart here I want for Christ." The world replies, "All right, you shall have it one of these days, but there is time enough, yet." I say of another, "Here is a man whose strength and vigor I want for the Savior." "All right," says the world, "do not be in such a fever about it. We are all agreed with you–we all think as you do, that religion is important–but wait awhile, put it off, take your time, tarry a little! There is no cause for all this hurry and this fuss."

If I ask the world what it means by talking like this, it says, "Well, you see, some of these people are so young. It is too soon for them to think of giving their hearts to Christ–would you have all the

boys and girls turn saints? Would you have all the young men and women walking in the ways of Christ, and following in the footsteps of the Crucified?" I answer, "Yes, indeed, I would!" But I wonder at the world's impudence in putting such a question as this concerning some of you, for some of you are not young. You have passed the period of youth years ago, and yet you are unconverted! And if I might hold parley with the world about some of the youngsters, I cannot about you.

Why, surely, the world cannot have the gall to tell me that you who are 30, 40, 50, or even 60 years of age are still too young! I should not wonder, indeed, but that it will turn around and tell me that you are too old, and that your time of mercy is past and I am too late! At any rate, Satan often does play both tunes, and while today he says, "Too soon," tomorrow he cries, "Too late." Too young to be saved? Is anyone too young to be happy? Too young to be a Christian? Is anyone too young to get the richest treasure that can make human hearts glad?

O young people, do not let the lying world tell you that you are too young! When our Lord was on earth, He said, "Let the little ones come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Do not believe that it is too soon for Christ to welcome you! Your need of Him begins with your birth–for you are born in sin and shaped in iniquity. As soon as ever you begin to act, you begin to sin in acting. Your first tendency is to fall as soon as

ever you are on your feet. It is never too soon to have the strong arm of a Savior put around you to hold you up, that you may be safe.

Then the world says, “O wait a little longer! We should like these young people to know something about life.” Well, but, base world, what do you mean by that? What have you to do with life? We, too, want the young people to know something about life–but what is life? Why, true life is to be found only in the followers of Christ in whom is Life! “Well,” says the world, “but we mean the life”–I know what you mean! You mean the death. You want the young people to know something about life, you say. I hear you. It is the voice of the same hissing serpent that said, “You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

And our mother Eve, in order to know evil as well as to know good, has destroyed this race! And many a young man and young woman, in trying to know good and to know evil, has come to know that which has made the head to ache, and the heart to palpitate, and the nerves to tingle with exquisite pain! That pain which has brought the frail body to an early grave and the doomed soul down to the lowest Hell! I pray God that our young people may not know life in that aspect, but that they may know life in the true sense, and search for it where only it is to be found–

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One,
There is life at this moment for you.”

“Ah, then,” says the world, putting on its best smiles, “it is all very well for you to talk, but we do not want ouryoung people to give up all their pleasure.” And what have you to do with pleasure, you painted Jezebel? What have you to do with happiness, false deluder of souls? The world–this canting, hypocritical world–dares to utter and dwell upon that word, “pleasure.” But it does not know what it means–ask those who have tried its joys–its princely minds such as Byron, who, like an angel, flew through the Hell of this world’s pleasures. Ask them what they have made of it all, and their only answer is in a groan and with a sigh, deeply heaving from their inmost spirits. They join in modern times with the verdict of the ancient royal philosopher who said, “Vanity of vanity, all is vanity!”

Pleasure, indeed! Happiness, indeed! You base world, what do you know about it? It is because we would have these people possessed of pleasure that we wish them to be converted and that we desire to see them joined to Christ! It is false, as false as God is true, that religion makes men miserable. Spurious religion may do so. They who worship Moloch may adore him with shrieks and cries! But the worshipers of Jehovah bow before their God with gladness! They come into His Presence with thanksgiving, and into His courts with joy! The richest joy, the noblest festivities, the most enchanting mirth that hearts can know is that which we find at our

Father's Throne when we adoringly worship Him and do Him active service.

When the prodigal came trembling back from the far-off land to his father's house, his misery ceased and his joy began as soon as his father had spoken. What bliss must have thrilled him with the word of his gracious parent's lips! The best robe! The precious ring! The costly shoes! The fatted calf! All for me? Why, it seems too good to be true! But so it is to be–and not only in his case, but with us all! "Religion's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Our cup has joy's quintessence distilled into it and it is filled to the brim. "That your joy may be full," said the Master. And it is full–as full as God's eternal love, as Christ's most precious Grace and the Spirit's blest communion can make it! Yes, as full as Heaven and eternal bliss can fill it.

Now I wonder what else the world has to say by way of wishing to keep these people a few more days? Oh, yes! Oh, yes–I know–it brings out the ledger and puts the pen behind its ear and it says, "A young man ought to mind the main chance. He should get on in business and then, when he has made a competence, he may sit down and think about the world to come. But his first object should be to make money." Yes, my good Sir, and if you would but speak the whole of your mind, you would say that he ought, in the last place, to make money, too. I knew your father well! He began life as you would have these young people begin, and he plodded on,

and plodded on to the end of his allotted term–never having had time to think about religion.

He was such a rare sensible old gentleman, such a wise man! "What I want, are facts and figures," he said, "none of your nonsense! Do not tell me about your opinions! I cast my books up on Sunday–that is the way to spend your Sunday. I dare say when I have nothing else to do I shall have time to think about my soul." He was a rare "fine old English gentleman." A very wise old man. But one night he lifted up his eyes in Hell, and with all his accurate bookkeeping and balance of accounts, he had to sum it up–"No profits! I have gained my wealth, but lost my soul!"

And oh, if he could come back again, he would say to his son, "My son, you have better begin business at the right end. Make the soul sure, first, and then look after the body. Hook yourself fast to eternity and make that right–and then see after the slippery things of time as best you can in subservience to that." At any rate, let Mr. Worldly-Wiseman say what he may. God, who knows more about us than we do about ourselves, says, "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you."

What is the drift of all this waiting? What the world means is just this, "Ah," says Madam Bubble, "here is a young person impressed–if we laugh at him it will deepen the impression. But we will say to him, 'Come, come, let the impression go for a little

while. This is not the fit time. When you have a more convenient season you can bring it on again.' " This game the old Tempter keeps on playing over and over again. He does it very blandly–he does not oppose religion, but "everything in its proper place," says he–"and this is not just the time for it. Wait a little longer." He said this to some of you ten years ago, and he is saying the same to you tonight. And if you live he will say the same ten years from now, and again when you are on your dying bed!

And so with this cunning he will cheat you out of your soul! The world says, again, to itself, "Every time we get this impression put off, we get the conscience more unlikely to receive it again, for no man cripples his conscience without suffering injury." If I say to my awakened conscience, "No, I will not hear you," my ears get less retentive of the sound, and Mr. Conscience himself grows less able to speak. When the knocking at the door has been heard for a long time and not answered, a man gets to be so in the habit of hearing the alarm that he could go to sleep and let a man knock all night.

Moreover, the world says, "Well, if they do go at last, yet we will exact from them as long a time of service as we can. Suppose they do leave us and engage in the service of Christ, yet we shall have had their help in the work of the devil for a good long time, and they will be poor old lame things when they go limping into Christ's service. They will not be good for much, then." The devil

knows that Christ loves the young, and therefore he tries to keep the young from going to Him. “No,” Satan says, “if He will have that flower, I will not let Him have it in the bud if I can help it. He shall have it when it gets full blown and much of its beauty has gone from it. I will keep it with me while in its prime as long as I can.

“Yes, and there is this thing in addition, that while I have it in my power, I can do that to it which it can never get rid of in this life–I will lead it into sins that shall cleave to its memory. I will teach that young man vile songs that shall someday come up in his mind when he begins to pray. I will show him scenes that shall stagger him when he grows old, and make him cry as though his very bones were broken.” That is what the devil says! He wants to have you altogether, or if he cannot do that he would have you wait a little while.

O may God’s eternal mercy come to your rescue and may you be saved from Satan without waiting the ten days! May your hearts be brought to Jesus now! And how sad the thought that Satan is getting service out of some who will have to spend much of their afterlife in trying to undo what they have, in their blindness, been led to perform for the god of this world! What a waste of time and talent to build up in misery today what you will wish, for very shame, to pull down tomorrow! Some men have written books, or done deeds in early life which will meet them as long as they live–

confronting them in the path of service and proving to be their direst foes. It will be a source of ever recurring grief to find yourself wounded by an arrow feathered thus out of your own wing–to feel yourself crushed by stones your own heads set a rolling in days gone by.

Thirdly, having exposed the pretexts of the world, and tried to show its cruel designs, our real object is to have our hearers saved–and to have them saved now. I never did come upon this platform desiring that my ministry might be blessed to you months after you had heard the sermon! I trust I have prayed times without number that it might be blessed at once to the salvation of souls. It is an immediate result that we must look for and labor to achieve. There were three reasons why Abraham's servant wished Rebekah to go with him at once–and these move me to desire your conversion tonight.

First, he desired it for his Master's sake. He knew that Isaac was looking forward to the happy day when he should be married to his chosen bride. And oh, the heart of Jesus is longing after sinners. It is a happy day for the Savior when He welcomes the lost ones. It is one of Christ's wedding days when He gets a soul to come to Him. Oh how the bells of Jesus' heart ring when He hears a soul say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" You know how He suffered! See Him fastened to the tree! What is to pay Him for all His pangs? Nothing–nothing but the love of your hearts when you come to

Him with all your sins, and say, “Jesus, forgive me!” May you, then, come and trust Him now, saying–

“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Your blood was shed for me,
And that You bid me come to You,
O Lamb of God, I come!”

Our Lord, for the “joy set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame.” It is written that He rejoices over us with joy and singing, so that He reaps the fruit of His pains and groans in our salvation.

When the shepherd lays the sheep on his shoulders, he returns home rejoicing for he has found the sheep which was lost. The joy of finding the strayed one compensates him for all his toil. He forgets the length of the road, the toilsome climb up the mountains in search of it. It is found! It is found! That is enough–that one joyful cry embodies the measure of his satisfaction and rewards. How Christ delights to save! This is how Christ is rewarded for His soul’s travail. Abraham’s servant, too, desired it for his own sake because he was a faithful steward, and wanted to do his business well.

And how we desire your conversion for our sake! It will make us so happy! There is no bliss that can come to the soul of the Christian minister like the bliss of knowing that he has been made the means of bringing some to Christ. It is in this way that we

receive at once the fulfillment of the Scripture, “In keeping His commandments there is exceedingly great reward.” We get our reward while we are obeying His precept, “Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel unto every creature.” Our chief reward is in Heaven, but even now, whenever a lost sheep is found or a prodigal restored by Sovereign Grace through us, we immediately receive a recompense.

My dear Brothers and Sisters in the Sunday school, your reward is on high, but do you know what it is to have a crown of rejoicing even here? I am sure you do, if ever you have seen that some young spirits have been led by you to the Savior! Your hearts, full weary before, have been refreshed and you have gone back to your labor with more zeal than ever. Your desire has been increased and you long more intensely after souls. Ask our Brothers, the city missionaries, and our Sisters, the Bible-women, “What is your encouragement in your arduous work?”

They would reply that next to the Master’s Presence and the hope of His commendation at last, they placed the joy of doing good and seeing men, once as heathenish as any found in foreign lands, sitting at the feet of Jesus, all their nature changed, a legion of demons expelled, and now clothed and in their right mind–these once lost ones are found–the

But the principal reason that the man wished it was for Rebekah’s sake. He knew that Isaac would make a good husband for her. And

we know that Jesus Christ will make a blessed Husband to your souls. He will enrich you with all the treasure of His Grace. He will clothe you with His robe of righteousness. He will comfort you with His love. He will cheer you in this world. He will take you Home to dwell with Him in the many mansions above. You will find Him to be a precious Christ to you, and when you get to Him you will say, "I never knew what happiness meant till I found You." You will be grateful to think that you are saved, and therefore, for your own sakes, we desire that this very night you may give up your sins and that the Spirit of God may draw you, by His Grace, to cast yourselves upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus, trusting in Him to save you, as He will do if you put your faith in Him!

Think for a while, I beseech you, how much is to be gained by your immediately seeking the Savior! You at once are free from the guilt and condemnation of sin. You are at once clothed with a peerless robe of righteousness. Immediately "all things are yours"–that very moment–"all things begin to work together for your good." You have Heaven, then, for your home and your citizenship is in the kingdom of Glory. You shall never more lack any good thing. No evil can befall you or any plague come near your dwelling. Time would fail me to try to calculate your immediate blessedness.

And then you make eternal life sure and certain, whereas you may delay and delay till you lose the life which now is and that which is

to come! For your sakes we desire your immediate salvation! Our hearts are filled with joy and gladness as we sit at the King's table in His banqueting house and His banner over us is love! But we remember our friends outside, in darkness, poverty, and need and we would gladly call them in to our feast. There is room enough–and our hearts would be yet more filled with joy if we could see the edging completely filled with guests! O all you hungry ones, come and eat with us of angels' food, and drink with us of cups of salvation! Here is a royal feast–oxen and fatlings are killed! All things are ready–come to the wedding–the Master bids you come at once! Why remain in hunger and fear outside? Enter freely!

Now, lastly, we believe that this desire of ours is a very reasonable one and we think we can prove it without the necessity of entering upon a long argument. We will put before you, with this view, two or three little pictures. Alexander conquered the world and we should like you to do so, in the best of senses. We will ask Alexander his secret. "Alexander, you have overcome Darius. You have driven the Persians before you as a lion drives a herd of sheep. How have you done it?" The very question was once asked of him personally, and his answer was this–"I never delayed."

Everybody admits that, in his way, Alexander was a worldly-wise man and eminently successful–and here was the secret of it–"I never delayed." Do you hear that, young man? You want to be great? You want to be happy? What is your ambition? Learn from

Alexander! I think that a greater than he could have said that in his life–I mean the Apostle Paul. How was it that he was able to do so much during that latter part of his life in which God blessed him? Why, he could have said, “I never delayed.”

A number of men are upstairs in a house, amusing themselves with a game of cards. What is that? The window is red! What is that cry in the streets? “The house is on fire!” says one. “Oh!” answers another, “Shuffle the cards again, let us finish the game. We have plenty of time.” “Fire! Fire! Fire!” The cry rises more sharply from the streets, but they keep on. One of them says, “It is all right, I have the key of the door on the roof, and we can get out at the last minute. I know the way over the leads–it is all right.” Presently one of them says, “Are you sure we can get through that door?” and he goes to try, but finds it locked. “Never mind,” is the answer, “I have the key.” “But are you sure you have the key?” “Oh, yes! I am sure I have–here it is, try it for yourself–do not be such a coward, man, try it.” The man tries the key. “It will not turn!” he says. “Let me try,” says his friend. He comes and tries, and puts it in the lock, “O God!” he shrieks, “it’s the wrong key!”

Now, Sirs, will you go back to your game again? No, now they will strain every nerve and labor to open the door, only to find, possibly, that it is all too late for them to escape! So, some of you are saying, “Oh, yes! What the man says is well enough, but you know, we can repent whenever we like. We have a key that can turn

the Grace of God whenever we please. We know the way–has he not told us tonight it is just? Trust Christ, and we can do that whenever we please–we shall get out." Ah, but suppose you cannot do that whenever you please? Suppose the day comes when you shall call and He will not answer–when you shall stretch out your hands–but no man shall regard?

Suppose, suppose you should cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us," and the answer should be, "I never knew you! Depart, you cursed!" Besides, if you think that key will open the door, and you can repent now, why not repent now? You believe that you have full power to do so! O do it, do it, and do not trifle with that power, lest when the power is gone, you find too late that in one sense it never was there! Do you want one other picture of the folly of delay? Ah, you heard of it some time back last winter, and I should think you must have heard of it with tears in your eyes–I mean that terrible accident on the ice in Regent's Park.

Why didn't the people get off the ice when they could see it was rotten? Why did they not leave it when it was beginning to be cut up into such small pieces as to be scarcely larger than paving stones? It was all very well to be on it when it was a solid cake–but why did they not flee at once when there was danger? Nobody can now answer that question, and there is only this to be said–it is most probable that all those who were there meant to get off very soon. Probably nine out of ten of them may have thought to

themselves– “Well, it is getting rather dangerous, and it is not quite the thing to be here, but just one more merry ring–let us just cut one more ‘figure eight’ and have just one more dash up and down the slide! It will be firm enough for that–let us stand here for two or three minutes at any rate.”

They were all going to get off, but, ah, there is the end of the story–except that it is, even till this day, continued by other people with the sighs, and cries, and lamentations of husbands and of wives, of children and of parents who can now only regret the fatal delay–but can do nothing to make amends. Ah, some of you are on the rotten ice of the world’s pleasures and of your own confidence. It is all rotten–why don’t you get off?

“Oh,” you say, “I shall get off by and by.” Oh, I see you–there is something fascinating in your pleasures, and a man likes to see his neighbors happy. I see you skating over that dangerous ice, but why don’t you get off? With some of you life is getting very frail. Ah, those lungs are hardly sound–you are spitting blood. The gray hairs are getting pretty plentiful on your heard. You have had a warning–you have had one seizure and the doctor has told you what will be the consequences of another. Why don’t you get off when the ice is breaking up like this? You may get off–you may get off tonight.

If you perish it will not be the fault of one who would act the part of a Humane Society man and say to you, “Now, before the last breakup comes–now, before the rising of tomorrow’s sun which

may bring the final breakup–escape for your life! Look not behind you! Stay not until you have reached the Savior, and found mercy in Him!”

Ge 26:29 • Thou Art Now the Blessed of the Lord

SERMON 2238

"You Are Now The Blessed Of The Lord"

"You are now the blessed of the Lord."

Genesis 26:29

THESE words truly describe the position of many whom I address at this time. There are hundreds here upon whom my eyes can rest and to any one of whom I might point with this finger, or rather, to whom I might extend this hand, to give a hearty shake, and say, "You are now the blessed of the Lord." I need not say it in the same spirit, nor for the same reason that the Philistines did. They had behaved basely towards Isaac and now that he had prospered, they urged him to forget the past. They meant, "This is why we trust that you will deal kindly with us and overlook our

harsh conduct, for, in spite of all, God has so blessed you that you need not be fretful and pettish and remember what we have done." I am glad that I am under no necessity to strive to make up a quarrel in this way! These many years we have dwelt in peace and have enjoyed sweet fellowship together. You have often borne with my weaknesses and bestowed upon me a wealth of affection which I am sure I do not deserve. So, though I use the language of Abimelech and his friends, my motive is a very different one! Yet the truth is the same concerning many a one here–"You are now the blessed of the Lord."

There is, however, much force in the argument which these Philistines used. If God has richly blessed us, notwithstanding all our faults and failures, surely we should learn to forgive many injuries done to ourselves. If the Lord forgives us our debt of 10,000 talents, we must be willing to forgive our fellow servant his debt of 100 pence! Child of God, if you are now the blessed of the Lord, you will often turn a blind eye towards the offenses of your fellow men. You will say, "God has so blessed me that I can well overlook any wrongs that you have inflicted; any harsh words that you have said. I am now blessed of the Lord, so let bygones be bygones." May you have Grace given to you to do that, now, if any of you have had a little squabble with any other! If there have been any difficulties between any of you, I would hope that before I really get into my subject–while with my finger I point you out and

say to each one of you–"You are now the blessed of the Lord," you will immediately say, "As surely as that is true, I do, from my very heart, forgive all who have offended me, whether Philistine, or Israelite, or Gentile. How can I do otherwise who, myself, have received such Grace while so unworthy?"

Remember that that this was spoken by the Philistine king as a reason why he wished to have Isaac for a friend. In your choice of friends, choose those who are the friends of God. If you would have a blessing upon your friendship, select a man whom God has blessed! Look out for one who is a disciple of Christ and say, "You are now the blessed of the Lord; therefore I seek your acquaintance. Come under my roof; you will bring a blessing with you. Speak to me in the street; your morning word will be a benediction to me." It was the old custom with Apostolic men to say, as they entered a house, "Peace be unto this house." We have given up all idea of blessing our fellow men in that way. But why have we done so? Is it from a lack of love, or lack of faith in our own prayers that God would make it so?

For my part, I value a good man's blessing! As I drove up a hill, in the country, some time ago, a poor man and his wife were walking down the hill. I had never seen them before, but the woman pulled the husband by his coat. They both stood and looked at me and, at last, she said, quite loudly, "It's him, God bless him!" And although her greeting was not quite grammatical, it evidently

came from her heart–and I felt happier for it as I went on my way. I saw her, afterwards, and asked her the reason of her words. “Why,” she said, “I have read your sermons for many a year and I could not help saying, ‘God bless him!’ when I saw you, for you have been a blessing to me.” Thus that humble woman, being blessed of the Lord, became a blessing to me! And we, all of us, even the most obscure, who know the Grace of God, might daily be like a great benediction in the midst of the people.

When you think of your minister, say, sometimes, “God bless him!” It will do him good to hear it. Say to your friend, “God bless you!” Say to your children, “God bless you, my dear boy! The Lord bless you, my dear girl!” They will be the better for it if you, yourself, are the blessed of the Lord! You, grandparents, lay your hands on the children’s heads and bless them–they will not forget it when they grow up. It may be that you have done much more for them than you have thought. Concerning His flock, the Lord says, “I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in its season; there shall be showers of blessing.” God’s people are blessed that they may bless! Therefore, for the sake of others, as well as for your own, seek that my text may be abundantly true of you. May this be your prayer–

“Lord, I hear of showers of blessings
You are scattering full and free!

Showers, the thirsty land refreshing,
Let some droppings fall on me,
Even me."

It was for this reason that the Philistines sought the friendship of Isaac–because they could truly say to him, "You are now the blessed of the Lord."

I want not so much to preach from this text as to ask every Believer in Christ to feel that it is personally true. Once you were condemned, but, being in Christ Jesus, "there is, therefore, now no condemnation." "You are now the blessed of the Lord." Once your were at enmity against God, but now, being reconciled to God by the death of His Son, you are His friend–"You are now the blessed of the Lord." "You were sometimes in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord." How great the change for the man or woman to whom we can say, "You are now the blessed of the Lord!"

There was a day when I was cursed and there was a day when I loved sin and opposed God's will–but now I love sin no longer and I find my highest delight in doing the will of my Father in Heaven! My Soul, if this is true, "you are now the blessed of the Lord." You are a miracle of mercy! You are a prodigy of Grace and truly, "where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound." Sit still in your pews, you people of God, and roll this sweet morsel under your tongue! Once, because you believed not, the wrath of God was resting upon you, but now you can say, "O Lord! I will praise

You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comforted me."

Surely, then, "You are now the blessed of the Lord." You are poor, perhaps, in this world's goods, but being an heir of the "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in Heaven for you," why, "You are now the blessed of the Lord!" Or, perhaps, you are weak and ill, and scarcely able to be in your place. But though your flesh and strength fail, "you are now the blessed of the Lord," for, by His Grace, you will triumph over all! Though you are oppressed with many a fear and many a care, still, "you are now the blessed of the Lord," and on Him you can cast your care– and from Him receive deliverance from all your fears! Whatever your distresses, this overwhelms them all as with a flood of joy! You can join with one who, though in a very humble station of life, says–

"O joy! 'Tis mine, this life Divine,
Life hid with Christ in God!
Once sin-defiled, now reconciled,
And washed in Jesus' blood!
Oft far astray from Christ the Way,
I went with willful feet.
From hopeless track, love brought me back,
With words of welcome sweet."

If you can truly sing this sweet song, “You are now the blessed of the Lord.” You are not yet perfect–you are not yet taken out of the body to be with your Lord in bliss–you are not yet risen from the dead to stand before the Throne of God in your body of Resurrection glory! But yet you are now, even now, the blessed of the Lord! Will you let the flavor of this sweet Truth of God be in your mouth and in your heart while I seek to open this subject to you?

I would remark upon it, first, that in the case of Isaac, THIS WAS THE TESTIMONY OF ENEMIES. It was the Philistines who said, “You are now the blessed of the Lord.” There are some of God’s people who are so evidently favored of Heaven that even those who despise and oppose them cannot help saying of them, “They are the blessed of the Lord.” I wish that we were all such–so distinguished by piety, so marked out by strength of faith and prevalence of prayer–that even our Abimelechs might be forced to say to each of us, “You are now the blessed of the Lord.” What caused this heathen king and his companions to use such an expression about Isaac? In seeking the reasons which led them to see the bounty of the Lord in the case of Abraham’s son, we may find some signs of the blessing of God upon ourselves and upon our children.

I think, first, that they saw it in his amazing prosperity. We read in the twelfth, thirteenth and 14 th verses, “Then Isaacsowed in the land, and received in the same year a hundredfold: and the Lord

blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: for he had possession of flocks and possession of herds, and great store of servants." Prosperity is not always a token of blessing. It may be proof of the lord's favor, but it may not be. God sometimes gives most to those on earth who will have nothing in Heaven–as if, seeing that He cannot bless them in eternity, He would let them enjoy the poor sweets of time. I have heard it said that prosperity was the blessing of the old Covenant and adversity the blessing of the new. Nevertheless, it is true that worldly prosperity may be sent and has been sent to the children of God as a token of Divine favor. It is not always when we eat the quails, that they make us ill–God can send them in such a way that we may enjoy them and be strengthened by them. He can give riches as well as poverty. That was the Philistines' reason–and it is a Philistine's reason. It is not a very satisfactory one, but it has some force, for the Lord Jesus, Himself, gave the sign of blessing upon the meek, saying, "They shall inherit the earth." And in the same memorable discourse upon the mount, He uttered the exhortation and promise, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things"–the things which the Gentiles seek after–"shall be added unto you." So we may fairly construe the "mercies of God" as a sign of His blessing.

These Philistines had a further reason for thinking that Isaac was blessed of God–they felt it by Divine impression. A secret spirit

whispered to the king, “Touch not My anointed, and do My Prophets no harm.” God always has a way of making men feel “how awful goodness is.” They may jest and jeer against a Christian, but his life vanquishes them. They cannot help it! They must do homage to the supremacy of Grace. The promise is still true, “When a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” God will impress upon the minds of even unbelievers, this fact, that such a man, such a woman, is one whom God has blessed! Do you not know some Believers who have such an air of other-worldliness about them, that though they mix freely with the people among whom they dwell, men instinctively acknowledge that, “they have been with Jesus” and have been blessed by Him? I do not care to see pictures of the saints of old with a nimbus of light round their heads, even though they have been painted by the old masters–yet there is a something about one who lives a saintly life, a brightness encircling him–like the symbol of God’s Presence which separates him from those around him, and leads us to say to him, “You are now the blessed of the Lord.”

Further, before the Philistines bore this testimony to Isaac, no doubt they remarked his gentleness. I believe that there is nothing that has such power over ungodly men as meekness of spirit, quietness of behavior, patience of character and the continual conquest over an evil temper. If you grow angry when people are

angry with you, you will have lost your position. But if you can be patient under persecution; if you can smile when they ridicule you; if you can yield your rights; if you can bear and continue to bear, you are greater than the man who has taken a city! Remember the blessing promised to the disciples of Christ who are peacemakers? They are not only the children of God, but, "they shall be called the children of God." People will say, "If any man is a true Christian, he is one." They will have no doubt about it! When long-suffering, gentleness and meekness are in the life, men begin to say to such a one, "You are now the blessed of the Lord."

As the gentleness of the Lord makes us great, the gentleness of the saints brings to God great glory. Anger has a temporary sovereignty that melts in the heat of the sun. Quietness of spirit is king over all the land. If you can rule yourself, you can rule the world! Isaac conquered by his meekness, for when Abimelech saw that he yielded well after well rather than keep up a quarrel, he said to him, "You are now the blessed of the Lord." Some of you do not understand this. "What?" you ask, "are we not to stick up for ourselves?" That depends upon whose you are–if you are your own, take care of yourselves–but if you are Christ's, let Him take care of you! "But," you say, "if you tread on a worm, it will turn." Surely you will not make a worm your pattern? No, but let the meek and lowly Christ be your Example! Seek to be a partaker of His Spirit. He prayed, even for His murderers, "Father, forgive

them," and He always sought to return good for evil. I pray you to do the same–cultivate a gentle spirit and even worldlings will say to you–"You are now the blessed of the Lord."

Now, while these Philistines saw that God blessed Isaac, they nevertheless envied him, as we read in the 14 th verse.How strange it is that men, who do not care to be blessed of God, themselves, envy them who are blessed of Him! I heard one say, "It is not just that God should have a chosen people." Sir, do you want to be one of God's people? These blessings which God gives to them–do you want to have them? You may have them, if you will! If you will not have them, I pray you do not quarrel with God because He chooses to give to whom He wills. There are two great Truths of God, which, from this platform, I have proclaimed for many years. The first is that salvation is free to every man who will have it. The second is that God gives salvation to a people whom He has chosen. And these Truths are not in conflict with one another in the least degree! If you want the blessing of the Lord, have it even now, for my commission as an ambassador of Christ is to beseech men to be reconciled to God! If you do not want it, do not quarrel with God for giving it to His own chosen. It was so with those Philistines–they wanted not Jehovah's blessing and yet they envied Isaac, who had it!

But while they envied him, they feared him and courted his favor. Do I speak to some young Believer who has gone into a house of

business, or some Christian woman who has been placed in a family where her religion exposes her to opposition? Let me counsel you to go straight on, taking no notice of the hindrances thrown in your way. You will first be envied. After that, you will be feared! And after that, you will be sought after and your company will be desired. If you can only stay as firm as Isaac did, never losing your temper, but always being gentle, meek and kind, you will conquer! And you who are, today despised, will yet come to be honored, even as Isaac was by the very Abimelech who had, just a little while before, asked him to go away!

A man of God, who was bearing testimony for the faith, on one occasion was pushed into the gutter by a person passing by who said, as he thrust him in, “There, take that, John Bunyan.” He took off his hat and said, “I will take anything if you give me the name of John Bunyan. I count it such an honor to have that title, that you may do anything that you like with me.” To be identified with those who have been blessed of the Lord is worth more than all the favors of the world! We are in good company. If men despise you, it matters little when God has blessed you! If they push you into the gutter for being a Christian, take your hat off and thank them, for it is worthwhile to bear any scorn, that you may have the honor to be numbered with the followers of Christ! Rest assured that if you will count it a privilege, even, to be mocked for your faith, those who persecute you, today, will acknowledge your high position

tomorrow. It is a grand thing when any of us thus gets the testimony of our enemies, "You are now the blessed of the Lord."

II. Now, secondly, not only did his enemies thus bear witness to Isaac, saying, "You are now the blessed of the Lord," but THIS WAS ALSO THE TESTIMONY OF THE LORD. It was because he had the witness of God that he was able to behave as to secure the favorable verdict of the Philistines. Like Enoch, before his translation, Isaac, too, "had this testimony, that he pleased God" and was, thus meekly able to bear the displeasure of the world. When they drove him from one well, he dug another, yet all the time he, with joy, drew, "water out of the wells of salvation." He might almost have sat for the picture which Jeremiah drew of the blessed man, centuries afterwards, when he said, "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when the heat comes, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

Let us see, then, how Isaac had the testimony of God as to his blessedness.

First, this was the Lord's testimony to him in promises founded upon the Covenant which He had made with Abraham, his father. God said to Isaac, "I will be with you and will bless you." In the third verse of this chapter, the promise is made doubly sure to Isaac

when God says, “I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham your father.” And in the 24 th verse of the chapter, where the promise is renewed, it is still on the ground of the Covenant–“I am with you andI will bless you, and multiply your seed for My servant, Abraham’s, sake.” Now, do you know anything of the Covenant relationship between God and His people? The bulk of Christians, nowadays, are wholly ignorant on this subject. The preachers have forgotten it, yet the Covenant is the top and bottom of all theology!

He that is the master of the knowledge of the Covenants has the key of true divinity. But the doctrine has gone out of date except with a few old-fashioned people who are supposed to know no better, but who, in spite of all the taunts of their opponents, cling to the Doctrines of Grace and find in them the very marrow and fatness of the Truth of God. I love the promises of God because they are Covenant promises! God has engaged to keep His Word with His people in the Person of His dear Son. He has bound Himself, by Covenant with Christ, and will not, cannot go back from His Word–and Christ has fulfilled the conditions of the Covenant and He who has “brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant,” will certainly, “make you perfect to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight,

through Jesus Christ." The promise is a double promise when it is confirmed in Jesus!

Though we are poor and worthless creatures, yet we can say with David, "Although my house is not so with God, yet He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." Twice God says by Isaiah, "I have given Him for a Covenant to the people." Thrice happy are they who receive what God has given and who, in Christ, enter into that blessed bond! Beloved, if God has laid the promise home to you by the Spirit and let you see it as a Covenant promise, then God has borne this testimony to you–"You are now the blessed of the Lord." You are blessed now! You shall be blessed all your life on earth–

"And when, through Jordan's flood,
Your God shall bid you go,
His arm shall defend you,
And vanquish every foe.
And in this Covenant you shall view
Sufficient strength to bear you through."

Further, the Lord bore testimony to Isaac in secret manifestation. He came to him in the watches of the night andspoke with him, face to face. None but those who are the blessed of the Lord have such communion with Him. "How is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us and not unto the world?" asked Judas, not Iscariot, at the supper table, before the Lord's betrayal. Ah, Judas! It is

simply because you are not Iscariot, but a true disciple, otherwise had you never known intimately the Presence of Christ. If He manifests Himself to us in this choice manner, it is because He has blessed us in a way in which He would not bless the ungodly world. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His Covenant.” Do you ever get manifestations of Christ? Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit which is given to you? Then you have a Divine attestation that “you are now the blessed of the Lord!”

Isaac also found this testimony, I think, in Divine acceptance of his worship. We find that “he built an altar” and then he “pitched his tent.” Keep up the altar of God in your home and keep to the right order–the altar, first, and the tent, second. When God accepts you, there, and makes your family altar to be a place of refreshment and delight to you, you will feel that in thus doing, He is giving you the sweet assurance that you are now the blessed of the Lord. It is a pity that there are so many houses, nowadays, without roofs–I mean houses of Christian people without family prayer! What are some of you doing? If your children turn out ungodly, do you wonder at it, seeing that there is no morning and evening prayer, no reading of the Word of God in your home? In every home where the Grace of God is known, there should be an altar from which should rise the incense of praise and, at which the one sacrifice for sin should be pleaded before God day by day! In the midst of such

family piety, which I fear is almost dying out in many quarters, you will get the witness, “You are now the blessed of the Lord.”

Isaac had another proof that he was blessed of God in swift chastisement for sin. He told a lie–he said that Rebekah was his sister, whereas she was his wife. Although that might seem to prove that he was not blessed of the Lord, the proof of his blessedness was that he was discovered and became ashamed of it. Worldly people may do wrong and very likely get off scot-free, but if a Christian goes off the straight line, he will have an accident in his roguery and be found out, while other men may do 10 times as badly and never be suspected! Rascals who know not God and who despise the ordinary morality of honest men may speculate on the Stock Exchange with other peoples' money and never be found out. But if you who really love God only do it once, and say, “Well, I feel driven to it,” you will be caught as surely as you live! It is one mark of a child of God, that when he does wrong, he gets a whipping.

If I were in the street and saw strange boys breaking windows, I would say, “Go home, or I will find a policeman for you.” But if it were my own boy, I would chastise him myself. I would not meddle with the other boys, but with my own I would! So it is with God who says, by the mouth of Amos, to His people, “You only have I known of all of the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” It is a mark of God’s blessing a

man, that if the man does to sin–and better that the smart should wean you from sin than that something sweet should come in to make you the slave of that sin forever!

Well, I will not dwell further on this. God testified to Isaac's heart, "You are now the blessed of the Lord." May He testify that to each one of you who know His name and have received His Covenant promises! May the words come to you like a benediction from the Throne of God and send you out to testify of His goodness, and to bless Him who has blessed us, saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ!"

III. Now, in the third place, I must draw your attention to the fact that though Isaac was the blessed of the Lord, THIS DID NOT SECURE HIM FROM TRIBULATION. Already I have approached this part of my subject by speaking of the speedy discovery of his sin, but in addition to this, there were other sorrows not directly resulting from his own conduct, but permitted by God in order that he, who was now blessed, should be still further enriched in character and conduct.

Even before Abimelech saw the source of Isaac's Grace, he was "the blessed of the Lord." Yet he still had to move about. He was a pilgrim and a stranger, as was his father, and he lived as an alien in the land. He was without any inheritance in the country and though his flocks and herds increased, he dwelt but in tents, while others

reared for themselves stately houses and palaces. But God had prepared some better thing for him and "he looked for a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." Thus, this trial became a means of blessing to him, as trials always do when sanctified by the Spirit of God! If these words reach any child of God whose nest on earth has been disturbed, whose house has been broken up, I would seek to cheer you by the thought of the "continuing city" which shall soon be your portion. If you have, through Christ, an assurance of an abundant entrance, there, though you never have a house of your own on earth and roam from place to place a stranger, seeming to be, very often, in the way of other people, yet remember–"you are now the blessed of the Lord." Daily He does load you with benefits and you can even now have your home in His love–

"He loves, He knows, He cares!
Nothing that truth can dim!
He gives the very best to those
Who leave the choice to Him."

In spite of the position of blessedness in which Isaac was placed, he had enemies to meet. It is true that, at last, his foes became his friends, but the blessing of the Lord did not begin with their friendship–they discovered and surely confessed the fact–but Isaac had been "the blessed of the Lord" all along! When Abimelech sent him away and when "the herdsmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's

herdsmen," he was not shut out from God's favor. Jehovah never bade him depart, nor took from him His good Spirit. So, tried Heart, when foes press around you and one thing after another seems to go wrong, do not begin to write bitter things against yourself, as though God had forsaken you! Remember that it is of the Lord that you are blessed–not of men. He will never forsake you and His deliverance shall soon make your heart glad. Even in the midst of the trial, "you are now the blessed of the Lord" and, like Isaac, after you have drunk of the waters of "contention" and "hatred," you will be brought to Rehoboth where you shall have "room," yes, even to Beer-Sheba, "the well of the oath," or, "the seventh well," "the well of satiety," where your enemies shall seek your favor and glorify your Lord!

Isaac had especially one trial that ate into his very soul–he had domestic sorrow. Esau's double marriage with Hittite women was a grief to his father and to his mother. And I mention this because there may be some of God's people who are suffering in the same way. I saw one, some days ago, who said, "I am like the Spartan who carried a fox in his bosom, that ate even to his heart, for I have a thankless, ungrateful child." And, as he spoke to me, I saw the heart-break of the man. Ah, it may be that some of you are in that condition! If any young man or young woman here is causing that grief to a parent, I pray him or pray her to think of it! You are not heartless, I hope. You have not forgotten your mother's prayers or

your father's care of you. Do not kill those who gave you being, or insult and vex those to whom you owe so much! But oh, dear Brother or Sister, if you have come here broken-hearted about your Esau and all that he is doing, I want to take you by the hand and say, "But still you are blessed of the Lord! Let this console you." What if Abraham has his Ishmael? Yet God blessed him! Bear bravely this trial. Take it to the Lord in prayer. Give God no rest, day or night, till He save your boy and bring back your girl! But still, be not despairing! Be not cast down, for it is true of you–and drink in, I pray you, this cup of consolation–that, "you are now the blessed of the Lord."

Let me speak two or three earnest words in closing. "You are now the blessed of the Lord." "Now!" Beloved, labor to get a hold of a present blessing. If you are, indeed, saved, do not be always thinking of what you are to enjoy in Heaven, but seek to be the blessed of the Lord now. Why not have two heavens–a Heaven here and a Heaven there? What is the difference between a Believer's life, here, and a Believer's life there? Only this–here, Christ is with us–and there, we are with Christ! If we live up to our privileges, this is the only difference we need to know. Try to be, "now the blessed of the Lord." I have heard of a traveler who was followed by a beggar, in Ireland, who very importunately asked for alms. As long as there seemed a chance of getting anything, the old woman kept saying, "May the blessing of God follow Your Honor all

through your life!" But when all hope of a gift was vanished, she bitterly added, "and never overtake you." But the blessings which God has for His chosen are not of that slow-footed kind which never catch up with us. It is written, "All these blessings shall come on you and overtake you, if you shall hearken unto the voice of the Lord, your God." I beseech you, then, to lay hold of this overtaking-blessing! Let it not pass unheeded. "You are now the blessed of the Lord."

Next, be very grateful that you are in this position of Grace. You might have been in the drink-shop. You might have been speaking infidelity. You might have been in prison, you might have been in Hell. But "you are now the blessed of the Lord." Why, praise the Lord, whose mercy endures forever! If you do not lift up your voice, yet lift up your heart and bless Him for the Grace which has made you to differ from other people!

Again, tell others about it. If "you are now the blessed of the Lord," communicate to others the sacred secret that has been the means of bringing such joy to you. Are we earnest enough about the souls of others? Christian men and women, do you love your fellow creatures, or do you not? How few there are of us who make it our business to be constantly telling others the sweet story of Jesus and His love! I read, the other day, of a chaplain in the Northern army in the lamentable war in the United States, who, while he lay wounded on the battlefield, heard a man, not far off,

utter an oath. Though he, himself, was so badly wounded that he could not stand, yet he wished to reach the swearer to speak a Gospel message to him–and he thought, "I can get to him if I roll over."

So, though bleeding profusely, he kept rolling over and over till he got to the side of the poor blasphemer–and on the lone battlefield he preached Jesus to him. Some of the other men came along and he said to them, "Can you carry me? I fear that I am dying, but I do not want to be taken off the field. I should like you, if you would, to carry me from one dying man to another, all the night long, that I might tell them of a Savior." What a splendid deed was this! A bleeding man talking to those who were full of sin about a Savior's bleeding wounds! Oh, you who have no wounds, who can walk and possess all the faculties to fit you for service, how often you miss opportunities and refuse to speak of Jesus! "You are now the blessed of the Lord" and, at this moment, I would have you think that the blessed Lord lays His pierced hand on you saying, "Go and tell others what I have done for you." Never cease to tell the Divine story, as opportunity is given, until your voice is lost in death! Then your spirit shall begin to utter the story in the loftier sphere.

You are coming to the Lord's Table and I invite you, Beloved, to come here with much love. Do not come with doubts and fears, with a cold or lukewarm heart. Remember, "You are now the

blessed of the Lord." Come, eat His flesh and drink His blood. There, on the Table, you will see nothing but the embers of His flesh and blood. But if you believe, Christ will feed you spiritually upon Himself and, as you eat that Bread of Heaven and drink that Wine of Life, you may well hear a voice saying, "You are now the blessed of the Lord."

Well do I remember the time when I would have given away my eyes to be as a dog under the Table–to have eaten only the crumbs which fell as others feasted! And now, for 41 years, today, I have sat as a child at the Table, blessed be His name!

As I told our friends, this morning, this day is an anniversary of peculiar interest to me. Forty-one years ago I went down into the river and was baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit–

"Yet have been upheld till now!
Who could hold me up but You?"

May you, each of you, as you come to the Table, hear a voice saying in your heart, "Now a Believer! Now justified! Now quickened! Now regenerate! Now in Christ! Now dear to the heart of God! 'You are now the blessed of the Lord.'"

Oh, that some who came in here without the blessing would get it before they go! He that believes in Jesus has all the blessing which Jesus can give to him–forgiveness for the past, Grace for the present–and Glory for the future! "Blessed are they that have not

seen and yet have believed," is the word of the Lord to you, you doubter! He was made a curse for you, that He might redeem you from the curse of the broken Law of God, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." He hung on a tree for guilty man! Believe in Him and, as you believe, eternal joys shall come streaming down into your dry and desolate heart, and it shall be said to you, "You are now the blessed of the Lord." You shall be blessed now and blessed forevermore! God grant it, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen. Portion Of Scripture Read Before Sermon–Genesis 26.HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"–758, 757, 786.LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS–I have received letters from readers who speak of reading with interest the notes at the end of the sermons. I feared that these jottings had become monotonous and, therefore, I am amazed that they should interest so many. I am not able, like Paganini, to discourse sweet music on a single string and, therefore, I impute the interest spoken of, the love of the reader rather than to the genius of the writer! We are always interested in the smallest details of the lives of those we greatly love.

This present note may record the fact that on the last evening of 1891 and in the morning of New Year's Day, 1892, I gave two short addresses to about a dozen friends in this hotel. My silence of more than half a year is ending. The chirping of the first spring birds is heard in my land. It is true that I sat down, talked my little piece

and that I felt glad when it came to an end, but, still, it has been done, by His Grace, and he that was almost numbered with the dead is now beginning to speak in the ears of the living! These two little talks, only of interest to my friends, will probably be preserved in The Sword and the Trowel for February, for Mr. Harrald took them down in shorthand. You will all guess how happy I am, for I have now some signs and tokens of returning strength. And I am praising God with all my heart for such a wonderful restoration.

To friends who have lovingly kept up the funds for the various institutions, I send my heartiest thanks, and to all well-wishers my kindest regards. Yours to serve till death, C. H. Spurgeon, Hotel Beau Rivage, Mentone, January 2, 1892.

Ge 27:35 • Household Sin and Sorrow

SERMON 3473

H*ousehold Sin And Sorrow*

"And he said, Your brother came with subtlety and has taken away your blessing."

Genesis 27:35

THERE are some households where all are saved–how happy they should be! Where every son and every daughter, father and mother are all Believers–a Church in the house, a Church of which the whole of the house is comprised. It is such an unspeakable blessing that those who enjoy it ought never cease to praise God for it day and night. And there are very many other households that have a share of this blessing, but the blessing is not complete. Like Noah with his household in the ark–Shem, Japheth, and perhaps

some of the rest, their wives, Believers and saved, but Ham profane and wicked! And here was the family of Isaac, not a very large one–but two boys–and here were father and mother and one son, but there was also one unregenerate, one of the flesh, one carnal-minded and minding earthly things. And in this case this son, Esau, appears to have been a bold, manly, outspoken fellow who did not keep his irreligion to himself and made no sort of pretense about it. He despised the birthright. The great blessing which God had promised to the seed of Abraham he thought to be–well, a matter that did not concern him. For he received his pottage and enjoyed it. He was satisfied, for he could put on his goodly garments and disport himself as men of his time did–he was perfectly satisfied. He had not any particular concern about spiritual things–did not need them. And on one occasion he was so profane that he showed the little esteem he had for what his father, and mother, and brother valued beyond life, itself, by offering to sell this birthright that they thought so much of, for just a savory meal! He was a profane person, so the Apostle tells us, and I suppose that action to have been one piece of his profanity. He did it out of profane bravado as well as out of a careless disregard for it. He would, to show his profanity, give it up for a mere basin of lentils! And he became a source of great grief to his father and mother by his marriages, for he married a race that had been cursed of God, namely, the Hittites. This, we are told in the Chapter preceding the text, was a great

grief of mind both to Rebekah and to Isaac. They desired to have no connection with the heathen nations among whom they dwelt, for they were not merely worshippers of idols, but these nations were the most polluted in character. They had committed crimes that are not mentionable!

You remember how it was that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. The sins for which those cities were destroyed were common enough in the land, and Isaac did not wish, therefore, to cultivate any acquaintance with the people. He desired to keep his family altogether apart, but where there were two marriages you may readily imagine there was a good deal of connection. There was much sorrow caused to the people at home because there would be brought home to the tent, persons whose language would shock the piety of the household. There would be seen there, sometimes, reunions and gatherings that must have made Isaac's heart and Rebekah's heart very heavy, indeed. Here was a household with all that it needed of temporals, with the blessing of God upon it, but there was one son in it that caused a world of trial and trouble! I wish, sometimes, young men who are, as we say, sowing their wild oats, would remember something of the sorrow they caused to others, even if they did not think about the ultimate trials which they will be sure to bring upon themselves! If they knew how often the father's nights are sleepless and the mother's cheeks are wet with sorrow, they might at least, perhaps, not be

quite so bold in sin and open in it as they now are. Now the worst of it was that the presence of this Esau in the house was the occasion of leading all the others into a piece of business most discreditable to them all–and not to be defended for a single moment. Even one person in a household may put all the rest into a wrong position. There may be but one who does not fear God, and yet that one may eat, as does a canker, into the very vitals of the peace of the family and the character of all the house. Though they may be godly persons, they may be seriously deteriorated through having perpetually to come into contact with that one. And this was the case with that otherwise holy family–the presence of Esau became the occasion of much evil!

I shall briefly attempt at this time, first, to show you the sin into which the godly members of that household fell. Iwill show you how they were recovered from itsome of the afflictions which they had to sufferas the result of it. Well then, first, there were–

THREE GODLY PERSONS WHO FELL INTO SIN.

They were God-fearing persons in the household–Believers in the Covenant, expecting the blessing, attaching value to spiritual things–as Esau did not. All these three fell into sin. Their sin consisted, first of all, in a lack of confidence inone another. It is a very bad thing in a family when there is no confidence between the husband and the wife, between the children and the parents. Now Isaac wished to give Esau a blessing. He did not tell his wife but he

arranged very craftily that Esau should prepare a little banquet for him–and then on that occasion, when they were all alone, he would give him the blessing. The usual way, and the proper way, would have been for the parent, when he expected to die, to have in the whole family and pronounce the blessing before them all, just as Jacob did when he departed and blessed all his sons. But this was to be done in a covert, secret way. Isaac was afraid of the objections that might be raised by his wife, afraid of the very valid objection that she would have raised that God had said the elder should serve the younger and, therefore, he thinks of this. Good, easy man as he is–he thinks of a simple way of getting out of the matter–so he will have Esau there, and give Esau the blessing. He had no confidence, you see, in his wife–did not tell her what he was going to do. And it is generally a bad thing that a man is going to do when he does not tell his wife of it.

Then, meanwhile, the wife has not confidence in her husband! She hears this little speech between her husband and her son–she was eavesdropping, I suppose, always fearful that something of that kind might be done. And so without saying to her husband, "You are, in this, about to do contrary to the will of God," as she might have done with much gentleness–and Isaac, who was of a gentle spirit, a holy spirit, would have been quite prepared to hear it. But she did not want to do that–she thought, "You plot, so I will plot–and I will try to mar your plot. You are about to see Esau alone–I

will see if I cannot circumvent you." Then she goes to Jacob, and Jacob shows a lack of confidence in his father. He is willing to get the blessing out of his father by deceit, instead of going, as a manly son should, to his father and saying, "My Father, albeit I am not the first-born, yet you will remember God rules in this household and He has said, 'The elder shall serve the younger.' Evidently the blessing is mine and, besides that, I have bought of my brother (however hard the bargain), I have bought the birthright and you have no right to give it to him." He might have said somethingat any rate–much or little.

But instead of that, there is no representation made between them–they are all three, each one on his own account, plotting this and plotting that! Now I believe there is never that in a family but what there is sure to be mischief come of it. It is an excellent rule–though I may be comparatively a young person–I venture to say–a rule which all who try will find very advantageous to holiness as well as to their peace, to take care and keep everything clear and above board. And when any little difficulty comes, to try to remove it at once! And when another difficulty comes, to move that away, too–otherwise one difficulty will tell upon another. And little things kept back will go on multiplying and increasing till, perhaps, even Christian people will fall together by the ears, one with another! You must not tell me that it is a slight thing for a husband to fall out with his wife, or for a Christian household to be at sixes and

sevens! I tell you it is a thing which makes angels weep, makes devils rejoice, makes the world say, “Is this your Christianity?” We must have united, happy Christian households–and that we cannot have if we conduct our affairs with a lack of confidence in the one and the other! “In preaching the Gospel,” says one, “you shouldn’t talk about this! Mind your business, my Friend.” It is just such talk as Christ would speak if He were here! He often spoke about such practical things as these. His teaching was, in fact, of all the household and of the common everyday concerns–and so shall ours be if, perhaps, we may prevent some evil which otherwise may be a serious damage to the Church of God!

Now the next sin in their case was a lack of confidence in God–all three alike–for I can hardly distinguish betweenthe one and the other. Here is Isaac–he knows God’s purpose, but he does not see how God will fulfill it. There is Rebekah–she knows the purpose still better, but somehow or other she thinks God’s purpose won’t be fulfilled. She says, “Jacob, you are about to lose the blessing, yet God has said you shall have it. The decree will fail. You cannot believe that God will carry it out. Only tomorrow morning and Esau will get the blessing! I heard Isaac say he would give it to him.” Now she is so afraid that God would not accomplish His own purpose that she steps in to help the Lord! And what can any man or any woman do to help the Lord? If the Omnipotent and Eternal God cannot fulfill His own purposes, I am sure Rebekah cannot!

But she thinks she can. She does not have confidence in God. And there is Jacob–well, the blessing is for him and he prizes it above everything. It could not come to him by the rule of the flesh, but it is to come to him by the election of Grace, but he cannot sit down and let the Lord work His own purposes! "Be still and see the salvation of God" is a text that neither of them could understand, or if they could understand it, they could not put it in practice. Isaac is anxious to give the blessing. Rebekah is anxious. Jacob is anxious to get it for himself. And so all round they did not lean on God at all! They desire to do His will, but they do not trust Him to fulfill His own purposes! And what a sad thing this is in a household, and what a sad thing it is in an individual household when we cannot trust the Lord! Unbelief is a very prolific sin. Once we doubt the Lord, I know not what we may do next, and next, and next! It is a sharp turning off of the right road, that turning to trust in ourselves rather than in the Most High! It won't do, my Brothers and Sisters. It won't do. We walk rightly when we walk trustfully, when we leave our concerns in the hands of the Lord. But when we will carry our own burdens, we shall soon be in mischief. He that carves for himself will soon cut his fingers. He that runs before the cloud of God's Providence may have, before long, to come back again faster than he went forward!

There was another matter, and that was a lack of confidences in doing right. Isaac ought to have had confidence andto have given

the blessing to Jacob. He knew it was for Jacob, but he was, in all probability, afraid of Esau, so he would not venture to bring upon himself Esau's wrath. He will give the blessing to him, contrary to God's purpose. Rebekah cannot leave the matter with God and be truthful–she must concoct a scheme. Jacob cannot trust in doing right–he must make lies and do wrong to make things go right. And on the whole, he thinks that because God's purpose runs that way, he may take some license to lie as he will! Oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, let us always have faith that, as a straight line is the nearest distance between two places, the most efficient way to prosper, after all, is to do right–and the shortcut and the right cut is integrity, uprightness and truthfulness! If we begin to tack about this way and that, we shall have to our sorrow to tack again–only the longer we run we shall have to sail a great deal further and scarcely reach our haven at all, if we once begin that process! Some have been foolish enough to infer that their duty is to be judged of by Divine Purposes or Providences. This shows, again, a lack of faith in doing right. If they believed in doing what was a right thing, they would know that God would see those purposes were fulfilled. There is much mischief done in believing that we are to follow the promises of Scripture apart from the Law of God! There was a man who once had no wood in his house–and it came into his mind that his neighbor had a large stack of wood, and he thought, "All things are yours." Says he, "I'll go and take some wood. 'All things are

yours'–why should not I have some wood off my neighbor's stack?" But just as he was going to take a log of wood, this came into his mind, "You shall not steal," and he very wisely preferred the latter to the former!

And there have been some who have said, "Such a text came into my mind." Never mind, you stick to God's Law! It can never be right, text or no text, for a man to tell a lie! There are some things that cannot be altered and God never does alter. He bids you keep to His statutes. You keep to them. "But, perhaps, that might involve a great deal of suffering to myself." "He that cannot take up his cross and follow Christ is not worthy of Him." And this is a part of the cross–to be willing to suffer for well-doing. "But I may bring suffering upon other people, and might lose many opportunities of usefulness if I were to act exactly as my conscience should teach me." My dear Friend, what have you to do with usefulness? After all, your serving God is your first business, whether you shall be useful or not! God will see to that. You are to seek usefulness, but never usefulness by sinning–for that is the old doctrine of, "Let us do evil thatgood may come," and the notion, the old Jesuitical notion, that the end justifies the means, which can never be right! Do right if Heaven itself should grieve! If the skies should not be propped except by a lie, let them fall! Come what may, you never must in any degree or in any shape depart from the honest, the true,

the right, the Christ-like, that which God commands, that which alone God will approve!

"Well," says one, "but suppose now Rebekah had not thus deceived Isaac and got the blessing for Jacob, what might have happened?" Ah, that is one of the things I don't know, and that is one of the things none of us can guess! But I can as readily suppose what might have happened to set it right, as you can, or will dare suppose what would have happened to set it wrong. I can suppose that long before Esau brought in the savory meat, there might have come to Isaac's mind the recollection of the Divine Word, and he might have felt he was about to do wrong, and might have said to Esau, "I cannot do it. I am convinced, after all, that I have been guided by the flesh, and not by the spirit. I must give the blessing to your brother, Jacob." I do not see why that could not have happened! I think it very probably might. Certain I am that the Divine Purpose would have been fulfilled somehow or other–somehow or other–and it was not Rebekah's business, nor yet Jacob's business to attend to God's purposes! Their duty was to do the right thing and let things take their course.

Now think a minute about the sin of each one of these persons. There was Isaac. Isaac, a true Believer, a man who lived near to God, one of whom we know that he was given to meditation. He was often in the field at eventide to commune with God–a man of a quiet, gentle spirit. When the Philistines quarreled with him, he just

went out of their way. If they took one way, he took another. If they took that, he took another, and so on–a man of a very gentle mold. This was a virtue, but it led him into a fault. He was like some persons who are too gentle to say, "No." Too gentle to encounter opposition. Perhaps this was why he resolved to give the blessing to Esau, lest he should have a quarrel and bring down the wrath of Esau upon his head–and he thought he would do it so slyly that nobody would know it, and so he would avoid all sort of tempest and trouble in the family. My Brothers and Sisters, there is such a thing as allowing your gentleness to lead you into wrong. Firmness is needed in every question, and firmness especially where God's will is concerned. Isaac was in a great haste to transmit the blessing. He expected to see his seed. Now Esau was married, but Jacob was not. The father, perhaps, for that reason thought that the seed must, after all, therefore run on in the line of Esau, and not in that of Jacob. So he could not wait the Lord's time–could not tarry for the Lord to give the blessing, but, he said, "My eyes are dim. I am getting old"–not remembering that he might have 50 or 60 more years to live–even in his advanced old age! So he hurried to do what would have been right to do if God made him, but wrong to do when his own will made him! Ah, good men, and experienced men, too–you may be in a great haste through unbelief, and you may have to rue the day in which you were in such a hurry!

Then Isaac sinned in that he was forgetful of the mind of God. If God had said, “The elder shall serve the younger,” it was not for Isaac to judge of the rightness of that. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? He quarreled a little with the Doctrine of Election–could not quite see it–wanted, after all, that it should be of the will of man, of the flesh, and not altogether of the will of God. He liked Esau–who would not? A fine fellow, a man given to athletic exercises. And men of gentle mold always admire the opposite in their sons. They like to see the manliness developed in them. So Esau became his favorite, while Jacob, quiet in spirit, and one who loved holy things, should have been–if there had been any difference–should have been, at any rate, more dear to him. And so, running counter to the mind of God, the old man thought of this cunning device of giving the blessing in secret. There was Isaac’s sin.

Now look at Rebekah’s sin. She was a true Believer, too. Think not harshly of her, and yet excuse not her fault. She looked upon the blessing which went with the line of Abraham as being invaluable and precious. She desired that Jacob should have it. She knew, moreover, that Jacob would have it, for God had declared that it should be so. She was mindful of the Divine Words and deserved honor that she had that laid up in her heart. She was anxious, however, to prevent that Word of God from being thwarted. There was her weak point! She could not leave God to

fulfill His own decree, but so anxious was she about it that she determined that her own son, her dear son, should get the blessing–and she was willing to sacrifice herself and all that she had for it! I like to see in a mother a willingness to lose anything if but her son should be saved, and something of that is in Rebekah, though put in a wrong place, when she said, "Upon me be your curse, my Son." If he will but seek after the blessing, she bids him seek after it, and if there was any loss involved in it she is quite prepared to bear it. Her fault was that she came of a cunning family. We should call her a shrewd woman–a true mother of the Jews, as Jacob is the father. Their sin seems to have been stamped in them by their progenitors and she used that, as she thought, in order to prevent the purpose of God being frustrated, and her favorite son being deprived of the blessing!

Then, as for Jacob, he was a fine man in some respects, but he had too much shrewdness, too much business tact, I think they call it now-a-days. (Is not that what they call it now-a-days?) Or too much prudence?–That is another fine expression for a very spurious thing. He was anxious for the blessing. He valued spiritual things–he would not lose the spiritual blessing, whatever might happen, and he would do anything in order to obtain it, for he set a value upon it. Yet with all that, Jacob was too eager and became untrue in his eagerness to get spiritual things.

You see their faults, then. I have set them before you, and with nothing to extenuate them. Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us learn a lesson from these failings and pray God that we may be preserved from them. Now you notice in the second place–

II. HOW THEY ARE RECOVERED FROM THIS SIN.

I will call it their repentance. Now look at Isaac. As soon us Isaac perceives that he has been wrong in wishing to bless Esau, he does not persist in it. He will give Esau such a blessing as he may, but he does not think for a moment of retracting what he has done–he feels that the hand of God was in it. What is more, he tells his son, "He is blessed, yes, and shall be blessed." And a second time he calls Jacob to himself and in a solemn manner pronounces over again the blessing giving to him outright what at first he had gotten by subtlety. Here you see Isaac rising somewhat to a hero. He was timid and subtle, but now he has become bold and, let what consequences will follow, he will carry out what he knows to be the mind of God! The good old man, though he makes no confession of the fault here, doubtless did confess it before his God–and stuck firmly to the right.

As to Rebekah, she saw the mischief that she had caused, and did the best thing she could. She gave up her son and sent him away. Little do we know how much she loved him. Those Eastern mothers have a remarkable–a more than ordinary fondness for the favorite son. Yet she would give him up, she would make a

sacrifice of him for the blessing's sake, that he may live and the blessing be continued in him.

As for Jacob, from that very day he begins to develop–he becomes a pilgrim and a stranger–he puts himself under the protection of God. And the manhood of Jacob seems from that day to have been awakened in him, awakened, perhaps, by a sense of the fault he had committed. Altogether, the three persons, though the worse for their sin, were so led to repentance that they became afterwards better men and a better woman in future life. But now I have to remind you of–

III. THE AFFLICTIONS WHICH THEY BROUGHT UPON THEMSELVES.

There are families that have been very happy up to a point, but from that point something wrong was done and from that hour all happiness vanished. A whole family has been scattered, perhaps, or, if united, yet they are still subject to great adversity. Now in this case Isaac had wanted to see very soon the blessing continued. He did not see it. Jacob must be sent away–right away. He has the blessing, but he must go. Isaac lived to see him again in extreme old age–he lived to see his son come back, but there were some 40 years, perhaps, during which he was away. The son at home would be small comfort to him–and the son whom he had blessed must be taken away from him for a time. As to Rebekah, she never saw her son again. She bade him farewell with many a tear, and when he

returned, Rebekah was gone to her rest. She did not know what she was doing for herself. As far as she was concerned, she was forever separating herself and her son in this world. As for Jacob, he for whose good the whole was done–from that moment he had such a chapter of sorrows as made him say when he had gone through it, "Few and evil are the days of your servant." All through his life that one transgression cast a gloom over it all! The right part of it, the desire to get the blessing adhered to him–he never lost it–but the wrong part of it came on, came on very soon. God generally pays His people back in their own coin. If we sin against Him, somebody very soon sins against us–in the same way, too. Observe, he cheats his brother–then Laban cheats him! From the moment he enters Laban's family, it is first one cheat and then another. Laban tries to outdo Jacob, and Jacob tries to outdo Laban–a long, long tale of shrewdness and sharpness. If you choose to go on your own tack, you may. If you elect to be your own manager, you shall manage and you shall see what comes of it. Jacob found what came of it through his having to go to Laban in that way. He became the husband of two wives and he brought into his family a perpetual element of discord and alienation. When they brought him that coat which had been dipped in blood, and said, "Do you know whether this is your son's coat or not?"–when his sons deceived him, do you not think he must have remembered that coat that he had put on to deceive his father? When he went down into Egypt, must there not

have been some bitter thoughts? “Perhaps I had never been here if that turn in my life had not led me to the marriage of Laban’s daughters, and thus brought quarrel into the house, causing Joseph’s coming down here, and my coming down.” We cannot tell, but certainly it seems from that moment to have been true, “Thorns, also, and thistles, shall your life bring forth to you.”

You have often noticed his craftiness and said, “How wrong it was.” Notice the chastisement that followed. If he had not been a man of God, the thing might have answered, perhaps, but as a man of God he must be chastened for it. “You only have I known,” said God, “of all people of the earth. I will punish you for your iniquities.” There is no punishment for the Believer in the world to come, but in this world there are chastisements that will surely follow upon every sin. “As many as I love will I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous, therefore, and repent.” And especially in family sin–family troubles will come up with a terrible harvest if we once fall–perhaps it might be but once–into some family transgression. Fathers, people of God, take pains to rule your households in the fear of the Lord! Mothers, pray for Grace that in your families you may never lead any of your sons or daughters in a wrong path! Sons, ask for Grace that you may have the blessing! And if you are godly sons, deal wisely with your ungodly brothers, never letting them have to say that you were harsh, or overbearing, or unjust to them as Esau could truthfully say of his brother, Jacob.

But rather be more tender to them, give up more to them, be more kind with them than you would have been if they had been Christians, if by any means you might yet win them over and they might be brought to know the Savior. Oh, for a family in which there is constant prayer–family in which every child may safely follow the father's example–a family in which the parent's life shall always encourage the child to follow their example! Oh, for God-fearing households! They are the strength of the Church! They are the glory of the nation! God loves the tents of Jacob well, and there will He command a blessing, even life forevermore, where brothers dwell together in holy unity. Now as for Esau (one final word about him)–

IV. THE UNGODLY SON WHO MISSED THE BLESSING.

He was a profane person in character, a derider of holy things altogether. Care about them? Not he! His blind father's God? He cared not a bit for Him, nor any of those Covenant blessing that were to come! Let him live by his sword and by his bow–let him be a fine gentleman among the Hittites and among the Philistines and that will quite satisfy him. Now there are many–many of that sort. But it will be asked, "How is it written that Esau would have inherited the blessing but that he was rejected, though he sought it carefully with tears?" So will you be–so will you be if you go to work on Esau's plan! Esau wanted to have this world and the next, too. He wanted to have the pottage and the birthright. He wanted to

be a fine gentleman among the Hittites, and yet have the blessing. He wanted to have his wife of a fine noble Philistine family and be thought a famous fellow among them–and yet at the same time have the blessing that belonged to the separate people of God! And so with tears he sought to get that blessing, but he could not have it.

And so may you. You may say, "Oh, that I might be saved! Oh, that I might have the privileges of a Christian." You cannot have the privileges of a Christian unless you have the separated life of a Christian–unless you are willing to give up this world for the separated life of Christ–unless you will, with Isaac, feel that your possession is Canaan and walk by faith, and not by sight. If you do like Esau, you cannot have it hereafter. It is like John Bunyan's parable, Passion and Patience. Passion would have his best things first. Patience would have his best things last. Passion had all his best things and laughed at Patience as Patience sat there, but after a while Passion had used up all his best things, and then he had nothing left. But Patience had his best things last, and then he came in for his turn and, as John Bunyan says, "There is nothing after the last, so the good things of Patience lasted forever and ever!" So the good things of Jacob, when he chose the good part and sought after it–and with all his sin he did do that–it lasted and his name is in the Covenant, and he rejoices at this day before the Throne of God!

But Esau did not care for the spiritual, at least not enough to let go of the carnal. He only looked to have that if he could have the

other, too, and as he could not have that and the other, he preferred to let the spiritual blessing go. And though he cried about it and mourned about it, yet he could not go to the point of giving up the world for the sake of the world to come! And I know some people– I think I know some old people, too, who would like to be Christians, but they like their wine cups. They would like to be saved, but they like worldly amusements. They would like, in fact, to run with the hare and the hounds, too! They would like to serve the devil, or breakfast with the devil and sup with Christ! They would like to have in this world all the joys and the pleasures which belong to downright worldliness, and then they would like to have the pleasures of Christ as well at the Last Day! It cannot be. If they seek it carefully with tears, it cannot be. If you have chosen the world, have the world–if you choose Christ, you must count the riches of Egypt to be as nothing for the sake of His reproach!

May God bless these words and lead us all to faith in Jesus Christ, to a desire for the best things, and may He prevent our walking in the unbecoming way in which these three good people did. If we have so walked, may He lead us to repent, and help us to mend our manners, and save us, above all things, from being profane persons, as was Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. Amen.

Ge 27:38 • Warning and Encouragement

SERMON 3111

W*arning And Encouragement*

"And Esau said unto his father, Have you but one blessing, my Father? Bless me, even me, also, O my Father. And Esau lifted up his voice and wept."

Genesis 27:38

You know the story of Esau and Jacob. [See Sermons #239, Volume 5–JACOB AND ESAU and #1718, Volume 29–CERTAIN SINGULAR SUBJECTS–Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at .] Esau was the elder of the twin sons of Isaac andRebekah. The birthright was his by right, but he despised it. He was a profane person who did not prize the hereditary privilege which was really his. He actually sold his right to it to his younger

brother, Jacob, for a mess of "pottage of lentils." Time rolled on and Isaac, feeling the infirmities of age creeping upon him, determined to give to Esau the blessing to which, as his elder son, he was entitled. Rebekah wanted the blessing to be given to her younger son and, therefore, resorted to a stratagem in order to make the poor blind father believe that Jacob was Esau–and in that way Jacob gained the blessing by fraud. When Esau came in and found that the blessing was given to Jacob–and that it could not be revoked–he cried bitterly and besought his father to give him "but one blessing."

The whole story reflects no credit upon any of the persons concerned. It certainly brings no credit to Isaac–he was a true Believer in God, but he was a man of an easy-going, gentle spirit who did not control his household as he ought to have done. And it appears that in his later days he craved dainty dishes to tempt his appetite–"savory meat," such as he asked Esau to prepare for him–and so he did not wait upon God for guidance as to the bestowal of his paternal blessing but, in direct opposition to the Divine purpose, determined to give the blessing to the son whom God had not chosen. It was a bad thing for the household to be divided as it was–the husband and wife at cross purposes–Rebekah seeking the blessing for her favorite son and Isaac preferring the bolder spirit of the wilder man. I cannot excuse either Rebekah or Jacob. They were acting very wickedly in trying to get Isaac's blessing by fraud

and falsehood. Neither can I justify Esau, for he was trying to keep what he had sold to his brother and what he had despised and contemptuously called, “this birthright.”

One thing is certain–God’s Providence, notwithstanding their sin, carried out God’s purpose! It was no business of theirs, as it is no business of ours, to try to fulfill God’s decrees. God would have managed the whole affair far better without Rebekah’s meddling–and the foolish mother would not have had to send from home her darling son, nor would he have had to go away as an exile to endure all that he had to endure at the hands of the grasping Laban! Still, God overruled the evil and His design was accomplished, as it always is and always will be.

My special purpose at this time is to take this exceedingly bitter cry of the disappointed Esau and use it for two purposes. First, by way of warning taking it then out of its immediate context.

First, I am going to use Esau’s cry BY WAY OF WARNING.

Beware, my dear Hearers, first, of ever giving up spiritual benefits for anything that is carnal, or bartering eternalblessings for anything temporal. Esau came in from the chase hungry and faint. Jacob’s mess of red pottage smelt delicious to him and when he begged for it as a starving man craves food, his crafty brother sold it to him in exchange for his birthright as Isaac’s elder son. Esau’s sin consisted in his willingness to sell the Covenant blessing at

such a price as that–yet how many nowadays are selling their souls just as cheaply as Esau sold his birthright!

Some sell their souls for what they call “pleasure.” They say that they wish to be saved, but a little transient gaiety exercises more fascination over their minds than all eternal joys or the delights of present fellowship with God. The time will come when they will rue their fatal choice and call themselves a thousand fools. But just now they sneer at anything like self-denial with a view to eternal blessedness and count that man wise who makes the moments fly most merrily, who is satisfied with the passing “pleasure” of the hour. Foolish creatures of the day, I would to God that you were only creatures of a day that would die like the insects of a summer’s evening! But for immortal souls to barter eternal happiness for present joys is folly indeed!

We have known some sell their souls for gain. They are making money in a dishonest or disreputable way. To become Christians, they must give up their business–and they frankly say that they cannot afford it. Their shop would never “pay” if it were closed on Sundays! Their trade would never “prosper” if it were conducted on Christian principles! Possibly it is an evil trade and the gain from it comes out of the vices of men. There are such trades–God save all of us from having anything to do with them! But with many, the glitter of the 30 pieces of silver is more fascinating than

the Christ of God and, Judas-like, they take the silver, deliberately reject the Savior and so commit spiritual suicide.

We have known some sell their souls for the sake of the love of their friends. They laughed at you because you frequented a place of worship and expressed some anxiety about your eternal welfare and made some little reform in your outward life. And because of that laughter, you have gone back like a coward. You have turned your back on Heaven and are going down to Hell merely to escape the jeers and sneers of sinners like yourself! Such conduct is unworthy of anyone who calls himself a man. And such conduct will surely bring down the just condemnation of God upon anyone who is guilty of so acting. Yet how many snatch up the mess of pottage and push away from them heavenly blessings for fear somebody or other should call them Methodists or Puritans–and sneer at them for their precision of character!

Alas, some have even sold their souls for the cup of the drunkard. The intoxicating cup which is very rarely, if ever, a benefit to anyone, even when taken in what is called, “moderation,” leads to the certain damnation of many if they touch a single drop of it! It has allured thousands into the jaws of Hell! They could not resist its spell when once it fell upon them. It is, alas, only too true that men who were once honorable and loving husbands and fathers, have become brutes and monsters! No, I slander the brutes when I compare them with many men whom I have seen, who have

seemed, through strong drink, to have made themselves into incarnate fiends! There is the "pure river of Water of Life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb," and there the fire-water, which has its origin among the flames of Hell–and yet, when the choice is left to men–many of them prefer the fiery liquor to that Water which would be in them "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Some of those men who are selling their souls for drink are with us here–oh, that God would give them Grace enough to see themselves as they really are in His sight–that they might then ask for the Grace which would make them to be new creatures in Christ Jesus!

Others have sold their souls for lust–lust which I must not now describe, lest the cheek of modesty should be caused to blush. Alas! Alas, we have known some who have stood high in the esteem of their fellow men, and some who have even dared to enter the visible Church of God, who, all the time, have preferred their "mistress" to the Messiah! And as surely as they continue to do so, the day will come when they will rue it! Oh, that they had the Grace to rue it now and to escape from their Delilahs! It will need more than human strength to shake off this deadly hydra, whose cruel folds have twisted themselves so tightly around them!

Beware, next, of being content with a secondary blessing. Esau did not seem to care that Jacob had the spiritualblessing. As he could not get that, he appeared willing to be content with a

temporal one. And many a man says, “Give me a prosperous business, give me plenty to eat and drink, let me enjoy myself and have my full swing in this life–and then, as for those joys of which Christians talk, I do not care a snap of the finger about them! They may have their fine country up among the stars for all that I care, if I can only have my good things here.” Yes, I know that is how you talk, my Friends, but I charge every sensible man here not to talk or act like that. Even if you could sell your soul for 50 years of intense physical or mental delight, what would become of your soul when the 50 years came to an end? And if you could have the 50 years extended to 70, or even to a hundred–what would become of your soul at the end of the century? And what would become of your soul forever–let men say what they will! “These shall go awayinto everlasting .” “The punishment” is of the same duration as the"life"–forever and ever! Is it worthwhile to make such a bargain as that–to buy a mess of red pottage at the price of your immortal soul? I charge each one of you to buy the Truth of God, and sell it not, to lay up for yourself treasures in Heaven, to get Christ, to get peace and pardon, to get acceptance with God, to get Heaven in the way that this Book tells you to get it! If you only succeed in getting broad acres of fertile fields, they must all be left! If you amass a great store of gold and silver, it must all be left to your heirs who will probably laugh at the thought of the fool who hoarded so much

for them to scatter! Do not act so foolishly, but seek to get the chief blessing! May God graciously enable you to get it this very hour!

Remember that if you leave this world without getting this blessing, you will, like Esau, find no place of repentance, though you seek it carefully with tears. Isaac could not take back what he had said, and God will never alter what He has said. There has been spreading in this country and in other lands, also, the idea of universal salvation–and mark you, wherever that doctrine spreads, vice must and will spread as the natural and inevitable consequence! When men are taught to believe in ultimate universal salvation, their immediate and legitimate inference is, "Then we may live as we like and all will be right in the end." And they will be right in the end! They areambassadors of the devil who teach that lying doctrine, and they will have to answer for it at the Judgment Bar of God! I bring you no such lies as that. I tell you what God's Book of Truth tells me, which is that if you live and die without repentance, without faith and without holiness–as surely as the righteous will live forever in Heaven, just as surely will you live forever in Hell! I implore you, as you value your immortal soul, do not imperil its eternal interest by trusting these dreams and fictions, for that is what they are. He who is righteous when he dies will be righteous forever! And he who is unrighteous then, will be unrighteous forever! So if you do not wish to have to weep and gnash your teeth in anguish and in anger at your own stupidity, fly

now, I pray you, to the hope that is set before you in the Gospel and lay hold of Jesus, who alone can save you! It is no pleasure to me to have to utter this solemn message. I deliver it from an aching heart, as the burden of the Lord. And having given you the warning, I leave it with you as I pass on to the second part of my subject.

II. Now I have more pleasant work to do. And that is to use my text BY WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT.

I would that, this very hour, from many hearts there might arise this cry of Esau, only giving it a far higher meaning, "Have you but one blessing, my Father? Bless me, even me, also, O my Father." And first, unconverted men and women, is it not time that you were blessed by God? Will not each one of you say to yourself, "Is it not time that Iwas blessed by God? So many dear to me have been blessed–my mother has long been in Heaven. My sister is a member of the Church. Some who sat side by side with me in this pew have believed in Jesus–when will the blessing come to me? The shower has fallen all around me–am I to be left forever dry? The great tide of Grace has seemed to sweep right up to my feet–will it never cast its gracious spray over me? I am getting on in years and I was brought here as a child. And now I bring my own child, but I am not yet saved. Many of my friends have died since first I heard the Gospel and I have been to their funerals. I have lost first one relative, and then another. If I had been the one to be

taken, alas, alas, what misery would my soul have been in at this moment! I have heard a great many plain Gospel sermons. Our minister does not try to make a display of oratory–he always aims at preaching to our hearts. I know that he wants to bring me to Jesus and that he would be delighted if he heard that some word of his, or anybody else's, had brought me to trust in Christ as my Savior. It is no small privilege to hear the Gospel faithfully preached and I have at times felt the power of that Gospel and have resolved to repent, but then I have turned back, and here I am, still unsaved. It seems a strange thing that some who were morally worse than I have been have entered into the Kingdom of Heaven while I have remained outside–and that some who had not heard the Gospel half as long as I had, accepted it–while I have so far refused it." I wish you would continue talking to yourself in that strain, both here and at home. Perhaps God will bless it to you, and especially if you add to it this prayer, "O Lord, it is time that I had Your blessing. Bless me, even me, also, O my Father! Pass me not by, O You loving, gracious, forgiving God! Have mercy upon me and save me!"

The next question that I have to put to you is this. Does not the plenitude of God's Grace encourage you, whoeveryou may be, to seek His blessing? Esau could only say to his father, "Have you but one blessing?" And, truly, his father had but one that was worth having! But you are not talking to Isaac–you are talking to

Jehovah! And when you approach Him to seek His blessing, you know that He can bless as many as He wills and that if He should withhold the blessing, He would be none the richer–and if He should give it, He would be none the poorer, for He is an Infinite God, able to do for all who come to Him all that they need! God has innumerable sons and daughters–why should not you be among them? He has a blessing for each of them, for of His children it can be truly said, "If children, then heirs," all of them heirs! Then why should not you be among them? If I knew that only three or four persons could be saved, I would not rest till I knew that I was one of them. But since God has so large a family, surely I may have good hope in coming to Him if He gives me the Grace to say, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned."

It should encourage you to seek God's blessing when you think of the plenitude that there is in Jesus Christ, God's Son. The merit of Christ was Infinite! The sheep for whom He laid down His life are innumerable as the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore! All who have believed in Him and all who shall yet believe in Him belong to that redeemed flock! So why should not you be among them? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," for "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him."

You ought also to be encouraged to seek God's blessing by the plenitude and power of the Holy Spirit. He is able to soften the hardest heart and to subdue the most stubborn will. There is no sinful habit that He cannot overcome. He can give you the Grace to enable you to resist the strongest temptation and to conquer the fiercest besetting sin. There is almighty power in the ever-blessed Spirit, so that there is no limit to His regenerating and sanctifying work!

Well, then, with the Infinite Father, the Infinite Redeemer and the Infinite Spirit, you need not say, "Have you but one blessing?" but you may open your mouth wide so that God may fill it! We are still authorized by the Giver of the great Gospel feast to cry, "Yet there is room." The provisions of that royal banquet are not merely for the few who belong to some insignificant little sect and who reckon themselves to be all of the Lord's elect! I can, by faith, see enormous tables laden with the oxen and the fatlings that have been killed, for the great King has made a great supper in honor of His Son's marriage–and He has bidden many to come to it! I know that Heaven is not meant for a small, select company of saints, for John saw there "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," who "stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits upon the Throne, and unto the

Lamb.” [Mr. Spurgeon’s Exposition on this passage and the remaining verses of Revelation 7, is given in Sermon #2704, Volume 46–“FLEE FROM THE WRATH TO COME”–Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at .] Then why shouldyou not be among them? Ask yourself thatquestion on your knees before God. If I were ill and there was only one physician in the whole of London, I would try to seek him out, but I could not be very hopeful of being healed by him. But the Hospital of Grace has room in it for all the patients who ever come to it! And never did the porters have to shut the door and say, “There is no room for any more.” That can never be the case! God “delights in mercy.” There is such a fullness of Grace in Christ Jesus that whoever comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out. [See Sermon #3000, Volume 52–NO. 3000–OR, COME AND WELCOME–Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at .] Then should not this encourage each one of you to believe in Jesus Christ and so to liveforever, for “he that believes on the Son has everlasting life”?

Further, dear Friends, are there any valid reasons why you should not be blessed? Do you really want to be blessedby God? Someone says, “Oh, that my sins were pardoned! Oh, that I had a new heart and a right spirit! I gladly would find the Savior if I could.” Is there any reason why you cannot find Him? “I have been a very great sinner.” That is no reason, for many great sinners have found

Christ! So why should not you? “But I have a very hard heart.” That is no reason why you should not be saved, for many very hard hearts have been softened by the Holy Spirit! And when you have a redemption which is of Infinite value and a Holy Spirit with Infinite Power to renew the heart, the greatness of past sin or the deepness of present depravity cannot be a reason why Infinite Mercy should not be shown to you! Can you find me any text in the Bible where it is written that you cannot be saved? I have heard an anxious soul sometimes say, “I know I never shall be saved.” But how do you know that? I believe that it is not so! Christ Himself said that “all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” And even under the old dispensation, God said, by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, “Come now, and let us reason together… though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” You cannot put your finger upon a single passage of Scripture which proves that you will be lost, so do not believe that it must be so till you have it from God’s own mouth! Never imagine that you are excluded from His pardoning mercy till He, Himself, says that you are–and He has never said that yet.

Who is there that stands in your way? I know that the devil does, but then Christ is the devil’s Master and He can enable you to overcome him! Do you know of one true minister of the Gospel who would push you back if he saw you coming to the Savior? I

know one who would gladly give you a helping hand and draw you to Christ if he could! Would your godly mother be grieved if she heard that you were converted? Is anybody (except Satan) praying that you may not be saved? I never heard of a prayer of that sort–and I never shall–but day and night the Lord's elect cry unto Him, "Bring the wanderers in! Let Jesus see of the travail of His soul until He is satisfied."

Did you ever hear me preach a sermon to prove that you had no right to lay hold on eternal life? I have heard of very discouraging sermons preached by ministers who seemed to be afraid that too many people would get to Heaven–as if it were "a close borough" for a few special favorites in the very small congregation at "Rehoboth" or "Jireh." That is dying out and I bless God that it never has been heard here. We preach to you a great Gospel and a free Gospel–and our hearts are yearning over you with a strong desire that you may be saved!

Can you point to any attribute in God, or to any action on God's part which looks like malevolence towards you? You tell me that He has dealt severely with you in His Providence. If so, it was that He might drive you to Himself. Has He broken your idols in pieces? If so, it is that you may worship the one living and true God! Are you very poor? Perhaps it is the best thing that could happen to you. How few rich folk ever enter the Kingdom of Heaven! Can you see anything in Jesus Christ that forbids sinners

from coming to Him? Look at His wounds–do they say, “Sinner, stay away from Me”? Look at His thorn-crowned brow–does that say, “I do not want you to come to Me”? Look at His widelyextended arms upon the Cross–do they repel you? No, rather, are they not kept open that the biggest sinners may get at His heart and find peace and pardon there? Think of the Holy Spirit and read about what He has done–and then see if there is anything in Him to show that He does not want you to come to Christ! Why, He is the blessed Spirit who draws sinners to Christ–He does not drive them away from Christ! If the Spirit convinces you of sin, it is not in order to make you despair–except to make you despair of saving yourself–and that is a good work, for it will lead you to look toJesus, that you may find eternal life in Him! I dare to say that there is nothing in the Father, there is nothing in the Son and there is nothing in the Holy Spirit which should make any truly repenting and believing sinner say, “Mercy is not for me.” On the contrary, there is a great attraction about each blessed Person of the Divine Trinity to draw sinners to Himself.

Now let me suggest one or two reasons why you should find mercy, if you come for it in God’s way–and God’s wayis that you should believe in His Son, Jesus Christ–that you should trust your soul into His eternal keeping. If you do that, there are many reasons why you may expect to find mercy at His hands. First, it would be an answer to the prayers of God’s people. It is certain that God

hears His people's prayers. I know that many have been praying that you may be saved. So your salvation would assure them that their prayers had been heard–and surely that is what God delights to do! It would be wrong for you to rely upon other people's prayers for your salvation, but I do bid you take comfort from the thought that it would cheer the saints of God to see you saved. The happiest Church Meetings that we ever have are those when there are many converts coming forward to tell what the Lord has done for their souls! Now the Lord Jesus very dearly loves His Church–she is His spouse–and as a good husband loves to please his wife, so Jesus loves to please His Church! And nothing can please His Church so much as to see sinners saved! So I think that is one good reason why we may expect that He will save many of you.

Besides that, if you are saved, whether you are a great sinner or a smaller one, Christ will have a new servant. And if you have been a big black sinner, Christ will have an especially good servant if He converts you from the error of your ways. Whatever you do, you do it heartily–you now persecute the saints with all your might–but if you were converted, you would love Christ as Mary Magdalene did, or as Saul of Tarsus did–and our Master delights to have such a servant as you would make! I trust, therefore, that you will be encouraged by the thought that as He wants many such servants, perhaps He will have you as one of them.

And, again, if you were converted, it would make the angels glad. Fresh hallelujahs and hosannas would resound throughout high Heaven if you were born-again, a new creature in Christ Jesus! They would set all the bells a-ringing with celestial carillons because another sinner had been saved from going down to the Pit! I think God will do it, for He loves to hear the melodies of the holy angels and of the spirits of just men made perfect.

Besides, it would be to His own Glory in Heaven above and down here among the sons of men. Oh, if the Lord would but convert some of the cardinals and priests of the Church of Rome–and some of the great infidel philosophers of the present day, and some of the licentious "nobility," as they are called–what high honor would be brought to the name of Jesus Christ! I must not detain you longer, but I must just urge you, if you really want the blessing of God in the shape of pardoned sin and acceptance by Christ, to seek it from the Lord as earnestly as Esau sought the blessing of Isaac. He sought in vain, but you will not seek in vain. If you believe in Jesus Christ, you shall be saved, be you who or what you may! We have God's Word for it–the Word of God who cannot lie! Esau pleaded piteously with his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father." He was a rough, wild man, yet plaintively he put his plea before his old father, Isaac–"Bless me, your elder son, your Esau, your favorite." Then, at last, he burst into tears, backing up his entreaties with his tearful appeal, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!"

You will not seek God's blessing in vain if you do but seek it sincerely and earnestly. Without His blessing, you are already condemned. Without His blessing, you will be condemned forever. With His blessing, there is Heaven for you–without it, there is Hell. With His blessing, there is peace and joy–without it, there is a gloomy future, ever growing darker and darker until it becomes eternal midnight! Cry mightily to God right now for His blessing! And while you cry, look to Jesus on the Cross, bleeding out His life for the guilty. One believing look at Him saves your soul forever!

Again I quote Paul's words to the jailer at Philippi, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." I do not know what more I can say. If I have been talking to sensible men who value their immortal souls–and God blesses my message–I have said enough. If I speak to those who are besotted with their sin and bent on committing spiritual suicide, I could not say enough though I spoke till your ears could no longer hear and my tongue could no longer speak. Eternal Spirit, arrest the elect of God this very hour and bring them to see themselves as they are–and then to see Christ as their Savior and force from each one of them this cry–"Bless me, even me also, O my Father." Amen.

Ge 28:15; 31:3,5; 48:21 • Four Choice Sentences

SERMON 1630

F*our Choice Sentences*

"Behold I am with you."

Genesis 28:15

First, turn to the 28 th verse, and read OF PRESENT BLESSING. The Lord said toHis servant Jacob, "Behold, I am with you." Jacob was the inheritor of a great blessing from his fathers, for this sentence was spoken in connection with the following words, "I am the Lord God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac." It is an inexpressible privilege, dear Friends, to be able to look back to father and grandfather and, perhaps, still farther, and to say, "We come of a house which has served the Lord as far back as history can inform us." Descended from Christians, we have a greater

honor than being descended from princes! There is no heraldry like the heraldry of the saints.

Jacob might be very thankful that, as God had blessed Abraham and had blessed Isaac, so He blessed him in the same way, speaking to him in the same terms as He had spoken to them, for He had expressly said to each of them, "I am with you." Are any of you the children of godly parents and has the Lord called you by His Grace? Then bless His name and take heed that you do nothing to dishonor an estate so honorable! Try and maintain, as long as you live, the good repute which in infinite love God has put upon your household. Are you, however, a child of godly parents and not yet converted? I would warn you against putting the slightest reliance upon your birth, for, remember, if Isaac was the child of Abraham, so also was Ishmael–but no blessing came to Ishmael of a spiritual kind.

It is in vain to be born of blood, or of the will of the flesh. We must be born again from above. God is sovereign, He is not bound to dispense His favors from father to son. And when He does so, we are to admire His Grace. Do not imagine that there is such a thing as hereditary piety–it must be worked in each individual by the same Spirit. Still, it is one of the highest privileges that God has ever been pleased to grant to me that I can rejoice in a father and a grandfather who trained me in the fear of God! And I congratulate every young person who has such a pedigree. God bless you. Be

not satisfied unless you, yourself, obtain such mercy as God gave to your ancestors and hear the Lord saying, “I am with you.”

This mercy was brought home to Jacob at a time when he greatly needed it. He had just left his father’s house and he felt himself alone. He was coming into special trial and then it was that he received a fuller understanding of the privilege which God had in store for him. Let me read the words to you–“I am with you.” I have tried to think them out, that I might speak concerning them to you, but they are too full. I defy anybody to measure their height and depth, their length and breadth! That God should give to Jacob bread to eat and raiment to put on was much–but that is nothing compared with, “I am with you.” That God should send His angel with Jacob to protect Him would have been much–but it

This includes countless blessings, but it is, in itself, a great deal more than all the blessings we can conceive of! There are many fruits that come of it, but the tree that yields them is better than the fruit! “I am with you.” Will God, in the very deed, dwell with men upon earth? Will God walk with a man and speak with him? “Lord, what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?” And yet He says, “I am with you.” You are in Your courts above and You make Heaven, Heaven by Your Presence, and yet You say, “I am with you.” What more could You say to a seraph than this–“I am with you”?

Why, when God is with a man there is a familiarity of condescension that is altogether unspeakable! It insures an infinite love. “I am with you.” God will not dwell with those He hates. He puts away the wicked of the earth like dross. He says to them, “Depart, I never knew you.” But to each one of His people He says, “I know you by your name; you are Mine. And, more than that, I am with you.” As a man delights to be with a friend, so are the delights of Christ with the sons of men whom He has chosen and redeemed with blood! “I am with you”–it means practical help. Whatever we undertake, God is with us in the undertaking. Whatever we endure, God is with us in the enduring! Wherever we wander, God is with us in our wandering!

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” If God is with us, can we ever be exiled or banished? If God is with us, what can we not do? If God is with us, what can we not endure? Well said the Apostle, as if answering that question, “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.” “I am with you.” Come, Brother or Sister, if you would get the fullness of this privilege, believe that God is near you, now–as near to you as he that sits at your side! No, nearer, for He is so with you as to be in you. And do you know that His whole Godhead is with you? “I am with you,” as if there were not another–the whole Godhead is with you! Your have not to cry aloud like Baal’s priests, or cut yourself with knives that you

may attract His eye, for He says, “I am with you.” He hears your sighs. He puts your tears into His bottle. “I am with you.”

And you have not only His Presence, but His sympathy! He means, “I am feeling with you, suffering with you. If there is a load, I bear it with you. If there is work to do, I will work with you.” You are workers, together, with God. Beloved, said I not rightly that I can never open up all this to you? Roll it under your tongue as a sweet morsel and if it goes down into your inward parts it shall not be bitter, but still sweeter! “I am with you.” Oh, the richness of this special blessing! How precious it must have seemed as it came to Jacob in that den of a place, where he lay with the hedges for his curtains, the heavens for his canopy, the earth for his bed, stones for his pillow and God for his companion! “I am with you.”

Tomorrow, when you shall open your eyes, you will look back to the west and say, “I have left my father’s house and my mother, Rebecca, behind me.” And the tears will be in your eyes and you will look to the east and say, “I am going to the house of my mother’s kindred and I know them not, except that I have heard concerning Uncle Laban that he is hard and grasping. And I know not how he will receive me.” But is not that a precious thing to start upon a journey with–“I am with you”–I, the Ever-Blessed? Though your mother is not with you, “I am with you.” Is there any young friend here who is leaving home? Are you going away for the first

time and do you feel sad? Or are you about to emigrate to a distant country and your heart feels heavy? Do not go at all till you can get a hold of this–"I am with you."

Say unto the Lord, "If Your Spirit goes not with me, carry me not up from here." Wait till He gives the answer, "My Spirit shall go with you and I will give you rest." This ought to be the blessing of your opening life, "I am with you." Is God with you tonight? Can God be with you? Souls come to service, after having quarreled with their wives and families. God is not with them. People who are following evil trades and living evil lives, rejecting the Gospel– God cannot be with them. "Can two walk together except they are agreed?" If you are a Believer in Christ and the Spirit of God has produced in you the true fruits of the Spirit, then you may say, "He is with me," but not else.

Now turn to the 31 st chapter of Genesis, at the third verse, and read these words, "I will be with you." We will callthis FUTURE BLESSING. It is almost unnecessary to take this second text, for if it is written, "I am with you," you may depend upon it that He will be with us, for God does not forsake His people! Some people believe in a God who loves today and hates tomorrow; who pardons sin and yet, afterwards, condemns. Such a God is not my God! My God is unchangeable–

"Whom once He loves He never leaves,

But loves them to the end."

“ I am God; I change not:

Therefore you sons of Jacob

Are not consumed.”

Poor Jacob had been living with Laban and had passed through many messes and troubles. It was time that he should receive the word of blessing over again. We read that, “Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban and, behold, it was not toward him as before.” He had begun to take root in the worldling’s portion and was willing to stay away from the promised land and build up a family among his worldly connections. But the Lord practically said to him, “This is not your rest.” Laban’s sons begin to growl as they see how their brother-in-law’s flocks have increased and, therefore, the time has come for Jacob to go. Jacob does not like it. He never did like moving. Family connections, a host of children and a mighty crowd of cattle made a removal a great undertaking.

Then the Lord said to him, “I will be with you.” As much as to say, “I will be more with you in Canaan than I ever have been in this place, which is not the land of promise. I will give you My special Presence if you will get away into the place of the separated life and walk with Me as your father Isaac did.” It was very sweet, many years ago, to some of us to hear the Lord say, “I am with you,” and to know that it was true, for, “truly, our fellowship was with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.” But it may, at this

hour, be very opportune if the Lord should renew His promise to us by saying, “I will be with you.”

You are commencing a new form of life. You are entering on new trials. You are undertaking new duties. And now comes in the new promise, “I will be with you.” If those upon whom you had a right to rely have turned against you. If those who were really indebted to you have become envious of you–“yet, nevertheless,” says God–“I will be with you.” Jacob’s journey was to be a very venturous one. He knew that Laban would not like it and, probably, would pursue him. But God says, “Go, and I will be with you.” He knew, also, that his brother Esau would be pretty sure to take vengeance upon him for the sorry trick he had played on him and that touched his conscience.

Jacob feared and trembled, but God said, “I will be with you.” The most plain road in the world is wrong if God does not bid us take it! And the roughest and most unpromising way will turn out to be safe and right if God commands our journey. Jonah thought it was all right to go to Tarshish, but God was not with him, and he came back by a route which he never expected to follow. If you go your own road, I wish you may be fortunate enough to meet with as good a return conveyance as Jonah did, for you will certainly have to come back! But if the road is ever so rough, if it is God’s road, you shall run over it like a young roe!

God will make your feet like hinds' feet and you shall tread upon your high places. “Your shoes shall be iron and brass; and as your days, so shall your strength be.” Only mind that you follow a road in which God can be with you, for there are some ways in which God will never be found. He cannot walk in the ways of sin, or worldliness, or selfseeking–if we choose these, we must go alone. See, then, the promised mercy, and rejoice in it! Go forward, dear child of God, if the pillar of cloud is moving, without the slightest hesitancy, and let this be your joy and comfort–“Certainly, I will be with you. In all places wherever you go, I will be with you.”

III. I need to go a step farther and come, in the third place, to EXPERIENCED BLESSINGS. Let us look at Jacob’s experience. Did Jacob find God to be with him? He had a long life and a tried one. He was a man that knew a great deal and men that know a great deal are doubly likely to meet with great trouble. Cunning, wise, crafty, prudent, self-reliant people frequently flounder out of one slough into another. Above all things, I should dread being partners with a man that is overly wise, for such men either make fools of themselves, or else they have to sleep with one eye open. Jacob’s cunning was a liability to him in the long run.

Abraham was simple as a child. He believed God and never stooped to trickery and, therefore, his life was a noble one. Jacob was a very wise person, the kind of gentleman to have made a financier, or the manager of a company. He was a rare man of

business. In fact, he was the father of the Jews and that is saying a great deal. Yet because of his sharpness, he was often robbed. And through his cunning he was overreached. And he did not, after all, so much enjoy life and was neither so rich nor so happy as his simple-minded grandfather, Abraham. We will, however, hear what Jacob has to say about these two gracious words of God, “I am with you,” and, “I will be with you.”

Turn to the 31 st chapter, again, and read the fifth verse. Up to as far as the time that he was about to leave Laban, hesays, “The God of my father has been with me.” I have read that testimony with great joy! I thought of Jacob thus–Well, you certainly were not eminent for Grace while with Laban. You were plotting and scheming–you against Laban and Laban against you–and yet your witness is, “The God of my father has been with me.” This is all the more encouraging coming from you! Jacob seems to say of his God–It was He that gave me my wife and my children. It was He that prospered me in the teeth of those who tried to rob me. The God of my father has been with me, notwithstanding all my shortcomings.“ I trust that some of you can bear the same witness. Though you have not been all that you could wish in the Christian life, yet you can say, "The God of my father has been with me.”

Now, we will look at him a little further on, in the 35 th chapter and the third verse. There we shall find him saying–“Let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who

answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went." As I have already said, he left Laban's house and it was a very venturesome journey, but God was with him! Jacob tells us that it was so. Poor Jacob was full of fear when he heard that Esau was coming to meet him. You can see that by the way in which he divided his flocks and his herds–and set apart so large a present for Esau.

But God does not leave His people because of their fears. I am so thankful for that! If He were to cast us off because of our unbelief, is there one of us who would not have been cast off long ago? There was Peter walking on the waters with a brave faith–was not Christ with him? Yes, or else he could not have stood on the wave at all. By-and-by his faith failed him and down went Peter! But did Christ give him up and say, "You shall die! According to your unbelief shall it be unto you"? No, there is not such a word as that in the Bible. But it is written, "According to your faith shall it be unto you." Jesus stretched out His hand and grasped sinking Peter, saying, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

So, though you may grieve the Lord by doubting and fearing, and though you ought to be ashamed of yourself for so doing, still, He will not forsake you! If there is faith in your heart, though it is but little, you shall have to say, in spite of your doubts and fears, "The Lord was with me in the days of my distress and was with me in the ways which I went." There was a night of wrestling with Jacob.

His faith enabled him to draw near to God in mighty prayer and his fear made him the more desperate and importunate. He said, “I will not let You go except you bless me.” Though he had to be importunate, yet it was not because God was against him, but because God was with him, for he that can exercise importunate prayer proves that God is with him strengthening him thus to supplicate. His wrestling ended in his victory!

On that day, too, I have no doubt, Jacob was very much cast down because he remembered his sin. He knew he had treated Esau badly and robbed him of the blessing. But, for all that, he came with a repentant heart to submit himself before his brother and to do what he could to please him. Because of this, God was with him. Oh, in that day, dear child of God, when you remember your faults and your heart is heavy, do not think that the Lord has left you! It is one token that He is with you–that He makes you confess your sin–and humble yourself before Him. Still believe in Him; still hear His Word and you shall have to say, “He was with me in the ways which I went.”

At the close of his life, we find Jacob more fully than ever confessing that the Presence of God had been with him. I read you the passage where he wished that the God that had been with him might be with his grandsons in the same way–the 48 th verses–“He blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abrahamand Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long

unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." There is his last testimony to the faithfulness of God. He had lost Rachel–oh, how it stung his heart–but he says, "God redeemed me from all evil."

There had come a great famine in the land, but he says that God had fed him all his life long. He had lost Joseph and that had been a great sorrow. But now, in looking back, he sees that even then God was redeeming him from all evil! He said once, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me." But now he eats his words and says, "The Lord has redeemed me from all evil." He now believes that God had been always with him, had fed him always, redeemed him always and blessed him always. Now, mark you, if you trust in God, this shall be your verdict at the close of life.

When you come to die, you shall look back upon a life which has not been without its trials and its difficulties, but you shall bless God for it all–and if there is any one thing in life for which you will have to praise God more than for another, it will probably be that very event which seems darkest to you! Did God ever do a better thing for Jacob than when He took Joseph away and sent him to Egypt to preserve the whole family? It was the severest trial of the poor old man's life and yet the brightest blessing, after all! Can you not believe it? Inside that hard-shelled nut there is the sweetest kernel that you have tasted! Rest assured of that.

Your Father's rumbling wagons have awakened you out of sleep and you are frightened by them, but they are loaded with ingots of gold! You have never been so rich as you will be after your great trouble shall have passed away!

IV. It is time for me to conclude and I do so by bringing before you, in the fourth place, one more word of blessing. We have had present blessing. We have had future blessing. We have had experienced blessing three times over. And now we go to TRANSMITTED BLESSING, for we find Jacob transmitting the blessing to his son and to his grandsons. Read in the 48 th verse–

"Behold I die: but God shall be with you."

I commenced by noticing the blessing which passed on from Abraham to Isaac. And now we see that Jacob hands it on to Joseph, to Manasseh and to Ephraim–"I die: but God shall be with you."

Some of you, perhaps, are thinking, "We are getting near the end of life. We have children, but they are not all converted, yet, and those that are, it may be, are dependent upon us–what will become of them?" Do you think God will leave your children? Can't you trust them with Him? What did your father do with his son? One after another the former generations have passed away and the Lord has been faithful to their successors! Do you think He will not be faithful to those who come next? You have brought up your

children in His fear. You have rested upon His name and, therefore, you may say to them, “I die: but God shall be with you.”

The time will come when we who are ministers shall be taken away from our beloved work on earth and we cannot help thinking about the dear friends who hang upon our lips and depend upon our ministry. It is well for us to look a little forward and say, “I die: but God shall be with you.” My venerated predecessor, Dr. Rippon, many a time prayed for his successor. I am sure he did not know who his successor was to be, for I was born about the time when he was dying! But, doubtless, I inherited that good man’s prayers. I am sure I did. “I die,” the old man might have said, “but God shall be with you.”

The Church at New Park Street thought it an awful thing for the old gentleman to die. But he would have been of no service to us if he had remained here forever. And so it will be, by-and-by, that people will say, “What will the Tabernacle people do if they lose their minister?” It will probably be the greatest of blessings when it happens! Many good men have clung to their places longer than they should have done–and have pulled down much that they had built up. It is well when the Lord says to such, “Friend, come up higher.” We may look forward, each one, to leaving our class, or to leaving the Church over which we watch, or to leaving the great work over which we preside and we may say, “I die: but God shall

be with you." God is not limited to one minister or 50 ministers! When we are gone, God will be with you!

They used to say of our dear friend, George Muller, "What will become of the Orphanage when Mr. Muller is laid aside?" When I was speaking to him, he said to me, "That was a question which I felt George Muffler had nothing to do with. God will use George Muller as long as He likes. And when He chooses to put him aside, He will use somebody else." And now, mark, George Muller is not at Bristol! I believe he is, at this present moment, preaching in America. He has been all over Europe preaching and the Orphanage has had very little of his personal presence–and yet it has gone on without George Muller so far!

Such a fact tends to answer man's idle questions. Blessed be the everlasting God–if Abraham dies, there is Isaac! And if Isaac dies, there is Jacob! And if Jacob dies, there is Joseph! And if Joseph dies, Ephraim and Manasseh survive! The Lord shall never lack a champion to bear His standard high among the sons of men! Only let us pray God to raise up more faithful ministers. That ought to be our prayer day and night. We have plenty of a sort, but, oh, for more that will weigh out 16 ounces to the pound of Gospel in such a way that people will receive it! We have too much of fine language; too much of florid eloquence and too little full and plain Gospel preaching! But God will keep up the Apostolic succession, never fear for that!

When Stephen is dying, Paul is not far off. When Elijah is taken up, he leaves his mantle behind him. “I die: but God shall be with you.” Take comfort, dear Friends, and may His Spirit be with you, through Jesus Christ, His dear Son, whose name is Christ, His dear Son, whose name is “Emmanuel”–God With Us. Amen.

[THE PREACHER has often been requested by his friends to report himself to them during his absence and he, therefore, begs to say that he has safely reached the South of France. He already feels refreshed by the change of scene and by escaping from fog and frost into a balmy summer air. If pain is thus avoided, the mind invigorated and life prolonged, the time is well spent. Our hope is in the great “Preserver of men,” that it will assuredly be so. The prayers of loving friends are asked that, in retirement, nets may be mended in which many may afterwards be taken.]

Ge 28:16 • Jacob's Waking Exclamation

SERMON 0401

Jacob's Waking Exclamation

"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not."

Genesis 28:16

THROUGH his own foolish wisdom Jacob had been compelled to leave his father's house. Perhaps we are scarcely able to judge of the sorrowful feelings which this banishment would beget in his soul. Here we go from one Christian home to another. If we leave the parental roof we may hope still to sojourn where there is an altar to the Most High God and where we can still unite with worshippers who fear His name. Not so in Jacob's case. The family of which he was a member was the only household in the land that

worshipped God. Or if there were some few others, they were probably unknown to one another and as far as Jacob knew when he left his father until he arrived at Padanaram he would not meet with a single person who feared the God of Heaven.

He was passing from one oasis to another across a burning desert. We may compare him to a swallow which for the first time leaves our shore to find no rest until it has passed with weary wing the long leagues of purple sea. You must know, too, that the prevalent notion of the heathens among whom Jacob dwelt was that their gods had only local authority. For instance, the god of Gaza was not the god of Askelon. The god of Beersheba would not be the God of Bethel. Their deities were gods of the hills and not of the valleys and it may be possible that from great dealings with the heathen, Jacob may have failed clearly to understand the fact that his father's God was not like their gods.

So in leaving his father's house there may have been this troublous thought rising in his mind that he was also leaving his father's God–that now his prayers would scarcely be heard–that he should be an alien from Jehovah's land and cut off from the congregation of the blessed. Jacob was not at this time a full-grown believer. He was but a babe in grace–his ready yielding to his mother's craft proves his want of advanced piety. And it is no trifling thing for a weakling to be taken from the nurture of home and cast alone upon a world unfriendly and ungenial. Happy was it

for the fugitive that his Lord's compassion followed him even when Jacob knew not that God was there.

Blessed was the dream which assured him that Jehovah's wing had covered his stony bed as really as it guarded his softer couch in Isaac's tent. The truth seemed to surprise him, but O how sweetly it must have yielded consolation! "Surely," said he and he opened his eyes to new light as though he knew that the night of distress had passed and that a day of confidence had begun–"Surely God is in this place and I knew it not."

I would address you this morning upon a topic which may perhaps be as useful to us as to Jacob if God the Holy Spirit shall but enable me to preach and you to hear. Oh, You that are everywhere, be speedily now–be You in this place and may we know it and tremble in Your presence. I shall speak on three points. First, the omnipresence of God–the doctrine of it. Secondly, a recognition of that omnipresence, or the spirit which is necessary in order to discover the presence of God. And thirdly, the results of a recognition of this omnipresence, or the practice which is sure to spring out of the conviction that God is everywhere.

First, then, THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE. He is everywhere. In the early Christian Church there was a wicked heresy which for a long while caused great disturbance and exceeding much controversy. There were some who taught that Satan, the representative of evil, was of co-equal power with God,

the representative of good. These men found it necessary to impugn the doctrine of God's universal power. Their doctrine denied the all-pervading presence of God in the present world and they seemed to imagine that we should of necessity have to get out of the world of nature altogether, before we could be in the presence of God.

Their preachers seemed to teach that there was a great distance between God and His great universe. They always preached of Him as the King who dwelt in the land that was very far off–no, they almost seemed to go as far as though they had said, "Between us and Him there is a great gulf fixed, so that neither can our prayers reach Him, nor can the thoughts of His mercy come down to us." Blessed be God that error has long ago been exploded and we as Christian men, without exception, believe that God is as much in the lowest Hell as in the highest Heaven. We believe that He is as truly among the sinful hosts of mortals as among the blissful choir of immaculate immortals who day and night praise His name.

We believe that He fills Heaven and earth and Hell. We believe that He is in the very space which His creation seems to claim, for creatures do not displace God. And even the space which is occupied by His handiworks is still filled with Himself. The rocky bowels of the unsearched-out depths are full of God–where the sea roars, or where the solid granite leaves no interstice or vacuum–even there is God. Not only in the open place and in the chasm, but

penetrating all matter and abounding everywhere in all and filling all things with Himself. “In Him we live and move and have our being. And in Him are all things and by Him all things consist.”

Yet while we receive the doctrine, it is well sometimes to enlarge upon it, not so much for sake of argument–but to make the Truth stand out the more clearly to our minds' eye. Let us remember, then, that in the three kingdoms God is everywhere. In the kingdoms of nature, of Providence and of grace we may say of each spot, “Surely God is in this place.” He is everywhere in the fields of nature. Go, if you please, to secluded parts–walk through the forest glades where the virgin moss presents a delicate carpet for human foot–where the deer starts up affrighted by the intrusion of an unexpected visitor. Where the wild bird scarcely flies from you because as yet it is not familiar with the cruel face of man.

As you walk among the intertwisted boughs, the natural arches of God’s own temple which He Himself has built, without toil of hewer of stone or dauber of clay, if you are a true Christian you will be compelled to say–

“The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree;
And seem by Your sweet bounty made
For those who follow You.”

You will solemnly exclaim, “Surely God is in this place.” Nor will you be alone in your thought for every waving flower will bear

witness to the fact. The insect humming in the breeze and the glossy beetle creeping among the sere leaves that lie beneath your feet–relics of many a winter's slaughter among the verdant groves–and the birds that are warbling among the trees will every one of them bear witness that surely God is there.

In fact, if there is one spot more than another where the consciousness of God's presence will strike the heart of the awakened man, it will be where other men are not but where he himself is alone the only worshipper of God. But you must remember, too, that if you go to the haunt of men, where they crowd and congregate together, that God is there. Go to one of the abutments of London Bridge and stand a moment gazing at the throng as it harries by, thousands and tens of thousands in an hour. On, on they sweep–the riches of nations grinding the roadway–and multitudes of men, women and children wearing away the granite pavement. God is there, though forgotten by most of them who are thinking only of the world and of its toils–forgetting that there is One above them who looks on all–One within them who inhabits all space.

Let not you and I forget, but let us say, "God is there. In every drop of blood that is circulating through the veins of the passengers. In every flush that is on the cheek. In every pulse that throbs or breath that heaves." The very fact that they are fed and clothed and are in existence will bear witness that surely God is in

that place. And thoughts of awe may soon come crowding over your mind and you may find yourself as much alone with God in crowded Cheapside, or in the thronging Borough, or noisy Whitechapel as though you were far away alone on the wild prairie, or in some desert of Africa where footprints of man could not be perceived. Verily God is in this place.

Then fly with the white sail across the deep and as you skim the foaming billows, if your soul be right within you, you will say, "Surely God is in this place." And when the storm comes on and the thunder rolls like drums in the march of the God of Armies and the skies seem to be wounded with the flashing of His glittering spear in the tremendous lightning–you may say in the midst of the storm as your boat reels and rocks and is tossed like a sea-bird upon the billow–"Surely He holds the waters in the hollow of His hand and God is here." And when you have landed and calm comes on and the fair white clouds sail slowly through the air, sailing gallantly in the abated breath of the wind–when everything comes out all fresh and green from the last shower and there is a clear shining after the rain and the storm and profound peace after the noisy hurricane–you may say then with refreshed enjoyment–"Surely God is in this place."

But I need not continue in such a strain as this. You shall go where you will. You shall look to the most magnificent of God's works and you shall say–"God is here upon your awful summit, O

hoary Alp! In your dark bosom, O tempestcloud! And in your angry breath, O devastating hurricane!" "He makes the clouds His chariot and rides upon the wings of the wind." God is here. And so in the most minute–in the blossom of the apple, in the bloom of the tiny field flower, in the sea shell which has been washed up from the deep. In the sparkling of the mineral brought up from darkest mines, in the highest star, or in yonder comet that startles the nations and in its fiery chariot soon drives afar from mortal view–great God, You are here, You are everywhere. From the minute to the magnificent, in the beautiful and in the terrible, in the fleeting and in the lasting–You are here–though sometimes we know it not.

Let us enter now the kingdom of Providence, again to rejoice that God is there. My Brethren, let us walk the centuries and at one stride of thought let us traverse the earliest times when man first came out of Eden driven from it by the Fall. Then this earth had no human population and the wild tribes of animals roamed it at their will. We know not what this island was then save that we may suspect it to have been covered with dense forests and perhaps inhabited by ferocious beasts. But God was here, as much here as He is today. As truly was He here then, when no ear heard His foot fall as He walked in the cool of the day in this great garden–as truly here as when today the stings of ten thousand rise up to Heaven, blessing and magnifying His name.

And then when our history began–turn over its pages and you will read of cruel invasions and wars which stained the soil with blood and crimsoned it a foot deep with clotted gore. You will read of civil wars and strifes between brother and brother and you will say–"How is this? How was this permitted?" But if you read on and see how by tumult and bloody strife liberty was served and the best interest of man, you will say, "Verily, God was here." History will conduct you to awful battlefields. She will bid you behold the garment rolled in blood. She will cover you with the thick darkness of her fire and vapor of smoke. And as you hear the clash of arms and see the bodies of your fellow men, you say, "The devil is here."

But Truth will say, "No, though evil is here, yet surely God was in this place though we knew it not. All this was needful after all–these calamities are but revolutions of the mighty wheels of Providence which are too high to be understood–but are as sure in their action as though we could predict their results." Turn, if you will, to what is perhaps a worse feature in history still and far more dreary–I mean the story of persecutions. Read how the men of God were stoned and were sawn asunder. Let your imaginations revive the burnings of Smithfield and the old dungeons of the Lollards' Tower. Think how with fire and sword and instruments of torture the Fiends of Hell seemed determined to destroy the chosen Seed.

But remember as you read the bloodiest tragedy, as your very soul grows sick at some awful picture of poor tortured human flesh–that

verily God was in that place, scattering with rough hands, it may be–the eternal Seed. Bidding persecution to be the blast which carries seed away from some fruit-bearing tree that it may take root in distant islets which it had never reached unless it had been carried on the wings of the storm. You are, O God–even where man is most in his sin and blasphemy–You are reigning over rebels themselves and over those who seem to defy and to overturn Your will. Remember, always in history–however dreadful may seem the circumstances of the narrative–surely God is in that place.

You may say that yonder nation depended for its welfare upon a woman's will, or that its destiny hinged upon a child's life. That this dynasty rose and fell at the will of some far-famed adventurer. That another nation was rocked to its very center by the fanaticism of a foolish pretender. We will grant you all this–for who denies the second cause when he vindicates the first? But let me say, more present is God than even man himself–more truly is He King than the kings of the earth. More certainly is the Lord a man of war than even warriors themselves. In everything in the pages of history–from the moment of its first unrolling till the last of the seven seals shall be loosed and the Book shall be read out before men and angels–you will have to say, "God was in it all."

But you will please recollect that while this is true of history in the whole, it is also true of it in the detail and with reference to yourself and your own lot–God is there. You had a fire by which

you lost your all, but God was there. By some fortunate circumstances, as you call it, you rose in life–God was there–but by a reverse, as you name it, you soon fell back again–God was there. There has nothing happened to you but what has been under His knowledge, His superintendence and His ordination. Do not, I pray you, forget yourself while you are thinking of nations and of kingdoms–for it is as true of a gnat that God supports it in life as it is of an angel. And God is as certainly in the creeping of the aphid upon a rosebud as in the tumble of an avalanche from the mountain. He is in all things. He is in you. He is in your circumstances today. Take the thought home and may God grant that it may have its due effect upon your minds. In Providence, then, we may say, "Surely God is in this place."

But we now come to the third great kingdom of which the Truth holds good in a yet more evident manner–the kingdom of grace. In yonder province of conviction where hard-hearted ones are weeping penitential tears, where proud ones who said they would never have this Man to reign over them are bowing their knees to kiss the Son lest He be angry. Where rocky adamantine consciences, have at last begun to feel–where obdurate, determined, incorrigible sinners, have at last turned from the error of their ways–God is there. Were He not there none of these holy feelings would ever have arisen. And the cry would never have been heard–"I will arise and go unto my Father."

And look in yonder province which shines under a brighter sun where penitents with joy look to a bleeding Savior. Where sinners leap to loose their chains and oppressed ones sing because their burdens have rolled away. Look there where they who were just now sitting in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death have seen the great light–God is in that place or faith had never come and hope had never arisen! And there in yonder province, brighter still, where Christians lay their bodies upon the altar as living sacrifices, where men with self-denying zeal think themselves to be nothing and Christ to be All in All–where the missionary leaves his kindred that he may die among the swarthy heathen.

Look there where the young man renounces brilliant prospects that he may be the humble servant of Jesus. Where yonder working girl toils night and day to earn her bread rather than sell her soul. Where yonder toiling laborer stands up for the rights of conscience against the demands of the mighty–where yonder struggling believer still holds to God in all his troubles, saying–"Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him"–God is in that place and he that has eyes to see will soon perceive His presence there.

Where the sigh is heaving, where the tear is falling, where the song is rising, where the desire is mounting, where love is burning, hope anticipating, faith abiding, joy overflowing, patience suffering and zeal abounding–God is surely present. He is present in the

temple of the human heart, consecrating it unto Himself. In all these three kingdoms then, my Brethren, let us never forget that "God is in this place." I shall turn from this point when I have just made the remark that we are still so apt to think that God is not here. You remember that splendid picture which God himself gives–"Heaven is My Throne and earth is My footstool."

You have seen, perhaps, the drawings of those wonderful statues which, amid the ruined temples of Egypt, lift their heads into the very clouds. They sit upon their awful thrones continually–men of common stature reach no higher than the pedestals of their feet–while these gigantic ones tower upwards into the very sky. Now consider these to be but a minute representation and let the colossal figure of Deity rise before your mind. Heaven is His Throne and there He sits–earth is His footstool and here are His feet–while higher than angels fly is the head of the All-Glorious One. We cannot comprehend the Lord at all–but we may think of Him as He represents Himself to us. He does it, you know, under human representations–let us then get the human representation into our mind.

He is greater than the greatest thought–His head higher than Heaven–His feet lower than the deepest Hell. Earth is his footstool, Heaven His Throne. Do not let us think that He is ever absent here, for if His face is seen in Heaven, the skirts of His garments are trailing over the whole earth. We are never at a distance from Him.

He is here, there and everywhere–with you and with me–very present at every time and in every circumstances. I cannot bring out the Truth more clearly than that. I therefore leave it to pass on to the second head.

II. BUT HOW ARE WE TO RECOGNIZE THIS PRESENCE OF GOD? What is the Spirit which shall enable us constantly to feel it? The presence of electricity is very soon discovered by those bodies which are susceptible of its action. The presence, for instance, of iron in a vessel is very soon detected and discovered by the magnetic needle. There is an affinity between them. That carnal men should not discover God here I do not wonder. That they should say, "There is no God," is no marvel because there is nothing in their nature akin to Him and therefore they do not perceive Him. They lack all the affinity that can discover His presence.

To commence, then–if you would feel God's presence, you must have an affinity to His nature. Your soul must have the spirit of adoption and it will soon find out its Father. Your spirit must have a desire after holiness and it will soon discover the presence of Him who is Holiness itself. Your mind must be heavenly and you will soon detect that the God of Heaven is here. The more nearly we become like God the more sure shall we see that God is where we are. To a man who has reached the highest stage of sanctification, the presence of God becomes a more sure fact than the presence of

anything else. In fact he may even get to such a state that he will look upon the fields, streets, inhabitants and events of the world as a dream–a passing background–while the only real thing to him will be the unseen God which his new nature so clearly manifests to him.

His faith becomes the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things which sense cannot perceive. Likeness to God is first necessary for the clear perception of His presence. Next, there must be a calmness of spirit. God was in the place when Jacob came there that night but Jacob did not know it, for he was alarmed about his brother Esau. He was troubled and vexed and disturbed. He fell asleep and his dream calmed him. He awoke refreshed. The noise of his troubled thoughts was gone and he heard the voice of God–

"In solemn silence of the mind,

My Heaven and there my God I find."

More quiet we want, more quiet, more calm retirement before we shall well be able–even with spiritual minds–to discover the sensible presence of God.

But next Jacob had in addition to this calm of mind–a revelation of Christ. That ladder, as I have said in the exposition–was a picture of Christ–the way of access between man and God. You will never perceive God in nature until you have learned to see God in grace. We have heard a great deal about going up from nature to nature's God. Impossible! A man might as well attempt to go from

the top of the Alps to Heaven. There is still a long gulf between nature and God to the natural mind. You must first of all perceive God incarnate in the flesh of Christ before you will perceive God in the creation which He has made. We have heard a great deal about men worshipping in the forest glades who never frequent the sanctuary of the saints. You have heard much–but there is little Truth in it.

There is often great sound where there is much emptiness and you will frequently find that those men who talk most of this natural worship are those who do not worship God at all. God's works are too gross a medium to allow the light. And the road to Him is a rugged one if we go the way of the creatures. But when I see Christ, I see God's new and living way between my soul and my God, most clear and pleasant. I come to my God at once and finding Him in Christ, I find Him everywhere else besides.

More than this, no man will perceive God wherever He may be unless he knows that God has made a promise to be with him and is able by faith to look to the fulfillment of it. In Jacob's case God said, "I will be with you wherever you go and I will not leave you." Christian, have you heard the same? Is the twenty-third Psalm the song of your faith? "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for You are with me." Have you consciously perceived that though men forsook you, God stood with you? Could you join the song of one who said–

"When trouble like a gloomy cloud
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,
He near my side has always stood,
His loving kindness O how good!"

Then to you it will not be difficult to perceive the presence of God. You will in fact look upon it as so real that when you open your eyes in the morning you will look for Him with praise. And when you close them at night it will only be that you may repose under the shadow of His wings. I wish we could get back to the spirit of the old Puritans–they believed in a present God always. We speculate about the laws of nature–we are always talking about organic matter and so on–but with them it was God and God alone. We look to the barometer about the rain and very properly in some sense. They looked to God. They prayed God either to stay the bottles of Heaven or to pour down the refreshing floods upon the thirsty earth.

We are talking about attraction–finding out the laws by which the worlds are governed–the Puritans looked to the Lawgiver rather than to the Law and to the present power of God manifest in His present hand rather than to any power which some dream may exist in matter itself or in the laws of matter. Oh to feel God everywhere! In the little as well as in the great! In our risings up and in our sittings down, in our goings forth and in our comings in! I can

conceive of no life more blessed and of no spirit more akin to the spirit of the glorified than the mind and heart of the man who

III. This brings me, very briefly, to one or two concluding remarks upon the PRACTICAL RESULTS OF A FULL RECOGNITION IN THE SOUL OF THIS DOCTRINE OF GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE.

One of the first things would be to check our inordinate levity. Cheerfulness is a virtue–levity a vice. How much foolish talking–how much jesting which is not convenient–would at once end if we said, "Surely God is in this place." The next time you have been indulging in mirth–I mean not innocent mirth, but that which is connected with uncleanness, or with any sort of ill–think you see a finger lifted up and you hear a voice saying, "Surely God is in this place"–let your recreation be free from sin. Let your amusements be such that you can enjoy them while God looks on.

If, too, we felt that God was in this place–how much oftener should we talk of Him and of Christ. This afternoon what will many of you talk of? Sunday afternoon talk is generally a great difficulty to some professors. They do not like to go right down into what they think as worldly conversation so they generally talk about ministers. They consider that to be a spiritual subject. And generally this talk about ministers is more wicked than talk about the devil himself. I had rather you should speak religiously concerning Satan than irreligiously concerning the angels of the

Churches. There is one tale about this minister and another tale about the other and the conversation ministers no edification. If they heard an angel say, “God is in this place,” the afternoon of the Day of Rest would be spent in much more profitable conversation.

But suppose that I have some here, today, who have been lately exposed to personal danger and peril. Brethren, do you not think if in the midst of the storm, or in time of disease, you had heard a voice saying, “Surely God is in this place,” you would have been perfectly at rest? The noxious air grows pure if He is there. The lightning cannot scathe, or if they scathe ‘tis bliss. The storm cannot devour, nor can the hungry deep engulf–or, if they do, 'tis bliss if God is there. What need have you at any time to fear? What is your nervousness but wickedness when the Eternal God is your certain refuge?

A Christian in alarm is in the hand of his God–surely he distrusts his Father–and doubts the heart of infinite love! “God is in this place though I knew it not.” I speak to some, too, who are in great poverty. You will go home today and there are bare walls. Perhaps the seat you sit upon has many of the rushes torn away and the table will be but very scantily furnished and very homely at the best. “Well,” but you will say, “surely God is in this place.” What comfort for you! You may remember the old Christian’s exclamation as you sit down for a blessing, “What, all this and my God present with me!” Better this and feel His presence than be

possessed of the best of the world's dainties and not know that He is here.

Perhaps you have today some sore trouble at home. There is a Christian wife who has to go home to an ungodly husband, or sons and daughters who have to go home to a household which is anything but what it should be. Do not be afraid to go home and as you cross the threshold, say, "Surely God is in this place." I think as John Bunyan passed over the threshold of the dungeon of Ledford Jail, if he could have known that he should be there twelve years but that in those twelve years he would write the "Pilgrim's Progress"–he would have said, "Surely God is in this place." And you, if you are called to enter a den such as Bunyan called his Dungeon–you, too, can say, "Surely God is in this place"–and you can make it a palace at once.

Some of you, too, are in very deep affliction. You are driven to such straits that you do not know where things will end and you are in great despondency today. Surely God is in that place. As certain as there was one like unto the Son of God in the midst of the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, so surely on the glowing coals of your affliction the heavenly footprints may be seen–for surely God is in this place. You are called today to some extraordinary duty and you do not feel strong enough for it. Go to it, for, "Surely God is in this place."

You have to address an assembly this afternoon for the first time. Surely God is in that place. He will help you. The arm will not be far off on which you have to lean–the divine strength not remote to which you have to look. “Surely God is in this place.” But were I to multiply pictures I might not describe the condition of one-tenth of my hearers. Let me rather leave it to you or to the blessed Spirit of God to make an application to your own lot and you shall find this to be a very well of comfort springing up with clear transparent water of life–“Surely God is in this place.”

And lastly, if we always remembered that God was where we are what reverence would it inspire when we are in His house, in the place particularly and specially set apart for His service! I do not think we always feel in the assembly of the saints as we should. It is not the place that is holy–holiness cannot attach itself to anything but moral virtues and to intelligent beings. There cannot be holy bricks and holy stones–the thing is absolutely impossible. But where two or three are met together in Christ’s name, there is He in the midst of them. He is here and yet how many come out of form and fashion.

Some few think rather more of the dress they come in than they do of what they shall hear, or of what spirit they shall come in. Oh! be dressed–stay not for another pin–but stay for another prayer if you will–that your soul may be dressed. Often you come with your body decked out but with your soul naked before God for want of

preparation in coming to His house. And when we sit here, what thoughts come in! What buyers and sellers transact business here! How have some of you been looking to the cares of housewives and some of you been busy with your shops! At home you do not take the shutters down on the Sunday–you keep them up.

I wish you would keep them up in your souls. You do not go into the field and look after the crops but some men bring the crops into the house of God and look at them there. You would not take down the ledger and cast up your accounts today, (though some do that), but at the same time you have a ledger in your brains and are busy with that when you ought to be thinking of your God. And I have noticed this, too, that in so large a house as this–where so many have to be occupied in showing persons to their seats, keeping the pews and arranging the services–there is such a tendency in the minds of such to have their minds dissipated from the solemn occupation in which they are engaged.

I think there ought never to be employed in churches and chapels pew-openers who are not converted, for they will not be converted afterwards. I suppose the case of a pew-opener being converted after taking the office was never known. Those persons who have to do with the externals of the house are just those persons who seldom know anything of the internal. They are occupied with the shell. They cannot think of the kernel. As with the grave digger and with undertakers–the least thoughtful of all, the most careless of all

men–so is it with them who are most in the sanctuary. They are often furthest from God. Oh, may we remember "Surely God is in this place," and it will give us awe when we come into His immediate presence!

But once more–what a restraint from sin would this thought be if it could be painted upon our very soul! A man once took his child with him while he went out to steal from a neighbor's stack and he said to the boy, "Look about you for fear anybody should see your father." The boy had read the Scriptures. Having looked all round, his father said, "Have you looked all ways?" He said, "No, father, there is somebody looking." "Who is it?" "Father, you have not looked up and there is God looking down upon you." The man's conscience was pricked.

Sinner, look round you! There is no one in the chamber, you perpetrate the crime. Look up! The father with murderous thoughts in his mind gets his son into an unfrequented lane, no eye he thinks beholds him, but the divine Watcher looks on and finds helpmates on earth to keep watch, too. Man, there are eyes in every wall. Nature is God's great photographer, photographing every act you do, no, every thought that you feel as it prints itself upon your brain and upon your brow. You shall find at the last great Day the picture of everything that you have done preserved–for He shall speak to the beam out of the sun and it shall tell what you said–and He shall

speak to the sun itself and it shall reveal the picture of the uplifted hand and of the dark deed.

You are always seen. Eyes watch you–through the thick darkness He beholds. The spirits which He sends abroad to and fro are ever at your elbow and He Himself is there. Now go and sin in the presence of God if you dare. Curse Him to His face if you dare. Go home today to break His Sabbath if you dare while He looks on. Surely men would not offend in the very presence of the Judge! They would not break the laws with the Lawgiver Himself before their very eyes. Let Him then abide in your thoughts–

"Nor let your weaker passions dare
Consent to sin, for God is there."

Ge 31:13 • The God of Bethel

SERMON 1267

T*he God Of Bethel*

"I am the God of Bethel."

Genesis 31:13

Jacob had been sent away to Padanaram and he might, perhaps, have stopped there if things had been quite as he wished. As it was, he stayed there quite long enough. He seemed almost to forget his father's house in the cares that his wives and children and the anxious oversight of his constantly increasing flocks involved. But God did not mean him to remain at Padanaram. He was to lead a separated life in Canaan and, therefore, things grew very uncomfortable with Laban. He was not a nice man to live with at any time, but he began to show his crotchets and his heart-

burnings, and a good deal of that scheming spirit of which there was a little in Jacob.

It came to him from his mother, who was Laban's true sister, and had her share of the family failing. So there were endless bickering, bargaining, disputes–each trying to outdo the other–till at last, as God would have it, Jacob could bear it no longer. So he resolved to take leave of that land and return to the land of his kindred. An angel appeared to him, then, to comfort him in going back to his father's house. The angel spoke in the name of the Lord and said, "I am the God of Bethel," which must have at once suggested to Jacob that the Lord had not changed, more especially in regard to him.

The occurrence at Bethel was the first special occasion, probably, upon which he had known the Lord and though many years had passed, God comes to him as the same God as He was before. "I am the God of Bethel." You remember, some of you, perhaps, the first time when pardoning love was revealed to you–when you were brought to see the love of God in the great atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ! Well, tonight, the Lord says to you, "I am the same God as you have ever found Me. I have not changed. I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed, even as your father Jacob was not consumed, for I was, even to him, the same God."

Brothers and Sisters, what a mercy it is that we have an Immutable God! Everything else changes. Yon moon, which but a

little while ago was full, you see now young and new again and soon she will fill her horns. Everything beneath her beams changes like herself. We are never at one stage and our circumstances are perpetually varying. But You, O God, are the same and of Your years there is no end. Your creatures are a sea, but You are the terra firma and when our soul comes to rest on You, Rock of Ages, then we know what stability means and, for the first time, we enjoy true rest.

Trust in the Lord forever and rest in the Lord alone, for He changes not. “I AM THE GOD OF BETHEL. Does not that mean, first, that our God is the God of our early mercies? As we have already said, Bethel was to Jacob the place of early mercy. Let us look back upon our early mercies. Did they not come to us, as they did to him, unsought and unexpected and when, perhaps, we were unprepared for them? I do not know what were Jacob’s feelings when he lay down with a stone for his pillow, but I feel very sure that he never reckoned that the place would be the House of God to him!

His exclamation showed this when he said, “Surely, God is in this place, and I knew it not!” It was the last thing on his mind that, amidst those stones, the Lord would set up a ladder for him and would speak from the top of it, to his soul. So, dear Friends, with some of us, when God appeared to us, it was in a very unexpected manner. Perhaps we were not looking for Him, but in us was

fulfilled that memorable word, “I am found of them that sought Me not.” We, like Jacob, were glad to meet Him, but we had not expected that He would come, or come in so Divine a manner, with such fullness of Covenant manifestation and such richness of Grace!

But He took our soul, before we were aware, and carried us right away from ourselves. We, perhaps, like Jacob, were sleeping. God was awake. This was the mercy! And He came to us while yet our heart slept and our mind had not felt awakened towards Himself. We seemed slumbering with regard to Divine things, but as a dream in the visions of the night, so God came to us. He found us sleeping, but nevertheless He manifested Himself to us as He does not unto the world. Do you remember all that? Then the God you have to look to is the God of that unexpected Grace! Do you need Grace tonight? Why should you not have it? Are you unfit for it? Do you feel more and more how undeserving you are of it? Yet it came to you before, when you were in just such a state! Why shouldn’t it come again?

Sitting in this house of prayer, why should not we again be startled and be made to say, “Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not! I did not think, when I came within these walls that here He would, in such a special manner, reveal Himself to me! But now I shall always think of the seat in which I sat, and say, ‘How wonderful is this place! It is none other than the House of God and

the gate of Heaven.’” The God of unexpected manifestations in your early days is still the same God!

Perhaps, dear Friends, some of you can look back upon those early manifestations as having taken place when you were in a very sad and lonely condition. Jacob was alone. He was a man that loved society. There are many signs of that. Perhaps, for the first time in his life, he was then out of the shelter of his tent and away from the familiar voices of his beloved father and mother. He had always been his mother’s son. Something about him had always attracted her. But now no one was within call. He might, perhaps, have heard the roar of the wild beast, but no familiar voice of a friend was anywhere near. It was a very lonely night to him.

Some of us remember the first night we were away from home– how dreary we felt as children. The same kind of homesickness will come over men and women and they say to themselves, “Now, at last, I have got out of the range in which I have been accustomed to go, and I have got away from the dear familiar faces that made life so happy to me.” Yes, but it was just then that God appeared to him and have not you found it so? Amid darkest shades, Christ appears to you. Have not you had times of real desolation of spirit from one cause or another in which the Lord has seemed more sweet to you than ever He was before?

When all created streams have run dry, the everlasting fount has bubbled up with more sweet and cooling streams than it ever did at

any other time. Well, remember all those scenes and the accompanying circumstances which made them seem so cheering, and then say, “This God, even the God of Bethel, is still my God. And if I am at present in trouble, if I am as lonely now as I was then. If I am brought so low that, literally, I have nothing but a doorstep for my pillow. If I should lose job, home and friends, and be left like an orphan among the wild winds, with none to shelter me, yet, O God of Bethel, You who were the cover of my head and the protector of my spirit, will still be with me, the God of those early visitations in times of my dark distress.”

Thus the God of Bethel, by that visit, cheered Jacob’s heart. I can hardly suppose that there was an individual more unhappily circumstanced that night than Jacob was. But I question whether ever any individual in tent or palace woke up so happy in the morning as the Patriarch did! Oh, it was a night that might make us wish to lie beneath the same dews and look up to the same Heaven, if we might see the same vision! We would put from us the downy pillow, the luxurious curtains and the comfortable well-furnished chambers and say, “Give us, oh, give us, Lord, if so it might please You, that same desert place, if we might but see You and hear Your voice, as Jacob did of old.”

Oh, how strong he was to pursue his journey after he poured that oil on the top of the stone! I guarantee you he went many an extra mile that day in the strength of that night’s sleep! Now he could

refrain from pining after his kindred and his father's house. Now he could keep his face constantly towards Bethuel's home, where his father had sent him, for the God of his fathers had said, "I am with you in all places where you go, and I will bring you back again unto this place." Now, do you not remember how you were strengthened and comforted in like manner? Have not you sung–

"Midst darkest shades, if He appears,
My dawning is begun.
He is my soul's bright morning star,
And He my rising sun"?

Have not you found Him all that you needed and more than you expected? Has not Grace for Grace been given and strength equal to your day because the Lord appeared of old unto you?

Brethren, the Presence of God puts the iron shoes on the feet of the weary traveler–no, it makes his feet like hinds' feet, so that he stands on high places! And while he pours out the oil of gratitude, God pours upon him the oil of joy and puts away his mourning. So the pilgrim foots it merrily over the rough way until he gets to the place where he is told to go. The God of Bethel, then, is the God of early visits unexpected, given when much needed and yielding just what was needed of peace to the soul. "I AM THE GOD OF BETHEL."

This title conveys a fresh lesson. Does it not mean, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ? What is, "Beth-el," but, "the House of God"?

Brethren, I hear that term constantly applied to your buildings that are made with stone or iron, with brick and mortar, or with lath and plaster or whatever it may be. Every little conventicle that is put up and every huge cathedral that is built, be it a building with lowly porch or lofty spire, is called the House of God. Well, did you never read where it is said, "God that made Heaven and earth dwells not in temples made with hands, that is to say, of this building"?

Have you never read that magnificent sentence of Solomon at the consecration of the temple, "Behold, Heaven and the Heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house which I have built"? Do you think, then, that He will dwell in any of these classic buildings, be they of Greek, or Gothic, or Norman or mediaeval architecture? Oh, Sirs, God is great and greatly to be praised as much outside as inside of your petty structures! He is everywhere! He fills all things! And God's House is not a place that you can build for Him, artistic as your tastes may be! Your memorial windows are not His remembrancers! They may charm you, they cannot please Him!

But there is a place where God always dwells. What habitation has He prepared for Himself and what tabernacle has He built? There is one abode mysteriously fashioned. We speak of its strange conception and its matchless purity of architecture. It was the body of the Lord Jesus Christ! "A body have you prepared Me." And the

house of God, the true Bethel, is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, for, “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” For, “The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth.”

The house of God is first, the Person of Christ, and then the Church of God which is the body of Christ mystically. This is the house and the household of God, even the Church of the living God! Not now to insist upon that meaning of the word Bethel, or on Him who came to Bethlehem, and there was born the very House of the Divine indwelling, I will rather muse upon that vision which made God, especially to Jacob that night, the God of the Savior. He saw the ladder, the foot of which was on earth, and the top reached to Heaven–a ladder which can never be explained in any other way than as a figure of that same Christ who came down from Heaven, who also is in Heaven, by whom we must ascend to Heaven and through whom Heaven’s blessings come down to us!

The God of Bethel is a God who concerns Himself with the things of earth, not a God who shuts Himself up in Heaven. The God of Bethel is a God who has a ladder fixed between Heaven and earth. The god of most men–the god of the unregenerate–is an inanimate god, or, if alive and able to see, he is an unfeeling God, careless about them and their personal interests. “Oh, it is preposterous,” they say, “to think that he takes notice of our sorrows and troubles–

and still more absurd to suppose that he hears prayer, or that he ever interferes in answer to the voice of supplication, to grant a poor man his requests. It cannot be!" That is their god, you see. That is the god of the heathen–a dead, blind, dumb god. I do not wonder that they do not pray to him. They could not expect an answer.

But the God of Grace is One who has opened a communication between Heaven and earth. He notices the cries of His children, puts their tears into His bottle, sympathizes with their sorrows, looks down on them with an eye of pity and a father's love. He has communion with them and permits them to have communion with Him. And all that, through the blessed Person of the Lord Jesus Christ! See where the foot of this Ladder rests on earth, for He lies in the manger at Bethlehem as a babe. He lives on earth the life of a common laborer, wearing the smock frock of toil. He dies upon the accursed tree a felon's death, that He may be like man even in bearing the image of death upon His face! This is where the Ladder stands, in the miry clay of manhood.

But see where it rises, for He is equal with God, co-equal, equal in power, wisdom, dignity and holiness and every glorious attribute, very God of very God, before whom angels bow! The bottom of the Ladder comes down to man, but the top of it reaches right up to God, in all the Glory of the mysterious Godhead. Thus, you see, there is a link between the two. And the God whom we

worship does hold fellowship with us and remains no silent spectator of our griefs. Up that Ladder angels ascend and our prayers ascend–our praises, our tears, our sighs. Jesus teaches them the way. And there is a traffic downwards, too, for blessings come, both rich and rare, by the way of the Mediator. We shall never be able to count them! How great is the sum of them! What traffic there is on the rungs of that Ladder!

Upwards, O my Soul, send your messengers a thousand times a day! But downwards God's messengers are continually coming–mercies, favors, altogether as innumerable as the sands that are upon the seashore, and all coming down that Ladder. There is a way of judgement which the swift-winged angel takes without a Ladder, but the way of Mercy always needs that staircase of light! No mercy or favor comes to us except through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom we deal with God and God deals with us. That way in Jacob's dream, you will notice, was eminently a way commended to him, for the foot of the Ladder was where Jacob lay and the top of it was where God was.

Have we realized this? Do you know God, my Brothers and Sisters, as One with whom you can speak–with whom you can speak, yourself–as real to you as your husband, your father, your friend? Are you in the habit of keeping up constant communication with your God? If you are, you know the God of Bethel. If you are not, I pray that the God of Bethel may reveal Himself to you. You

could not have had fellowship with God if there had been no Christ. Without the Ladder, how could there be a connection between Jacob and God? But with the Ladder, even Jesus Christ, the way is open, open always, open now!

Oh, it has been open many and many a time! We have resorted to it and never found it closed. We have cried to Him in deep distress, but the way upwards has been open when all surrounding ways were shut. We have needed mercy and mercy has come when we thought that mercy could not possibly reach us. Yet it came downwards when it could not have come in any other way. And it is just the same tonight. Oh, use the Ladder! Use it well. Dart your desires upwards now. They shall tread those rungs. Your thanks, your petitions, your confessions–send them up! They are welcome. The Ladder is made on purpose for the traffic. Use it, now, and as you use it, bless the God of Bethel with all your heart!

Still further, let us remember that this God of Bethel is the God of angels. We do not often say much about those mysterious beings, for it is but little that we know of them. This, however, we know–that angels are sent by God to be the watchers over His people. Jacob was asleep, but the angels were wide awake. They were going up and down that ladder while Jacob was lying there, steeped in slumber. So when you and I are sleeping, when the blessed God has put His finger on our eyelids, and said, "Lie still, My child, and be refreshed," there may be no policeman at the door, no

bodyguard to prevent intrusion, but there are angels always watching over us.

We shall not come to harm if we put our trust in God. “I will lay me down to sleep, for You make me to dwell in safety.” These angels were also messengers. “Are they not all ministering spirits?” And are they not sent with messages from God? To Jacob they had their errand. On more than one occasion angels bore him messages from the Most High. How far or how often they bring us messages, now, I cannot tell. Sometimes thoughts drop into the soul that do not reach us in the regular connection of our thoughts. We scarcely know how to account for them. It may be they are due to the immediate action of the blessed Spirit, but they may, for all we know, be brought by some other spirit, pure and heavenly, sent to suggest those thoughts to our soul. We cannot tell. The angels are watchers, certainly, and they are messengers without a doubt.

Moreover, they are our protectors. God employs them to bear us up in their hands, lest at any time we dash our foot against a stone. We do not see them, but unseen agencies are probably the strongest agencies in the world. We know it is so in physics. Such agencies as electricity, which we cannot perceive, are, nevertheless, unquestionably powerful and, when put forth in their strength, quite beyond the control of man. No doubt myriads of spiritual creatures walk this earth, both when we sleep and when we wake. How much of good they do us it is impossible for us to tell. But this we do

know–they are “sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation,” and they are, in God’s hands, the means, oftentimes, of warding off from us a thousand ills which we know not of.

Therefore we cannot thank God that we are kept from them, except we do so by thanking Him, as I think we ought to do more often, for those unknown mercies which are none the less precious because we have not the sense to be able to perceive them. Perhaps in mid-air at this moment there may be battles between the bright spirits of God and the spirits of evil. Perhaps full often when Satan might tempt, there come against him a mighty squadron of cherubim and seraphim to drive him back. And those strange battles of which Milton sings in his wondrous epic may not be all a dream. We cannot tell. We know they dispute–the good angels dispute with the wicked, and contend. We know that they are mighty in battle and strong on behalf of God’s people.

Regardless, this is true–Omnipotence has many servants and some of those least seen are the strongest it employs. If there is an angel anywhere, my Friend, he is your friend if you are God’s friend. If there is in Heaven or earth any bright intelligence flying swiftly at this moment, he flies upon no errand of harm to you. You can be sure of that. Occasionally I meet with very foolish people who believe in things which are unrevealed, in things superstitious and baseless fancies. Oftentimes they are not a little frightened about I scarcely know what–about enchantments, divinations, or

sorceries. There is such a credulity that still survives among the extremely ignorant.

But whenever I have heard such observations, I have always thought of that wonderful text in the Book of Numbers, "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel." There can be no spiritual powers which you or I have any need to fear! I remember hearing a good Brother speak about courage against the devil, and in reference to spiritual power he said that he believed that a man of God, when he had faith, could kick his way through a street full of devils from one end to the other. I admired his simile. It was worthy of Martin Luther, for it was the kind of thing that Martin Luther would have said.

Oh, if the air were as full of devils as it is of fogs, a man that has God within him might laugh them all to scorn. Who can hurt the man whom God protects? Unseen powers and terrible they may be, but they cannot injure us, for there are other unseen powers more terrible, still–the hosts of that Lord who is mighty in battle–and all these are sworn to protect the children of God. "You have given commandment to save me," says David, and if God has charged His angels to protect and save His people from all harm, depend upon it, His people are secure!

Moreover, the God of Bethel is the God of Providence. That He is the God of Providence and that He revealed Himself as such, is

very clear, for He told Jacob, “Behold I am with you, and will keep you in all places where you go, and will bring you again to this land, for I will not leave you till I have done that which I have spoken to you.” So He gave Jacob a promise that he should have bread to eat and raiment to put on–and should come, again, to that place in peace. Christian, your God is the God of Providence! He is the God of Bethel! Doddridge’s hymn, which we sang just now, thus celebrates His praise–

“O God of Bethel, by whose hand
Your people still are fed;
Who through this weary pilgrimage
Have all our fathers led.”

Let us think of it, Brothers and Sisters–God is with His people in all places wherever they go! On the land or on the sea, by day or by night, you never can be where God is not! It is impossible for you to journey out of your Father’s dominions. You may live in a mansion or a hovel and yet still be in His house, for His house is of vast dimensions. “In My Father’s house are many mansions.” You may dwell here or there and still be in the great house of the heavenly Father. And He is with you to provide you with all necessary things. Has not it been so until now? You may have had some very hard pinches. Perhaps you have partaken the bitter fare of widowhood. Your children may have cried about your need for daily bread.

Perhaps you have been very poor and the supply you have received has been scant. Still you are alive. Your food has been given you and your waters have been sure. Your garments are worn, but not quite worn out. Your shoes about you scarcely defend you from the damp, but still you are not altogether unshod. Until this time the Lord has helped you. Jehovahjireh has been your song. The Lord has provided. He whom Jacob worshipped as the God of Bethel has been the God of Bethel till now! Can you not trust Him? The little birds in the winter morning sit on the bare branches and sing when the snow covers all the ground–and they cannot tell where their breakfast will come from. They do the first duty–they sing–and they sing before they have had their breakfast! And God somehow provides for them. Seldom do you pick up a dead sparrow.

For the most part, the birds of Heaven are fed. Perhaps you would like to live in a cage and be fed regularly and have a pension. I believe that more of those birds die that are taken care of as pets by men and women than of those that are taken care of by God. So it is better for you to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. He has not let you starve, nor will He, even to your journey's end. Take this from His own mouth. "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." There is God's, "verily" for it! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but that "verily" shall never fail!

He promised Jacob, too, that he should have a seed and a posterity. It did not look like it as Jacob lay there, but yet He proved its verity before Jacob came back. Why, when he returned he had some 12 children about him! There was a God of Bethel! He had, indeed, granted him the desire of his heart. As the good man said a little while after, "With my staff I crossed this Jordan and now have I become two bands." Ah, Jacob! He promised to provide for you. Look at the those sheep! Listen to the lowing of the cattle. What do they mean, Jacob? "That is the provision that God has given me in the land of exile."

Ah, and you have, most of you, got far more than you ever reckoned upon. You have, some of you, to thank God, indeed, for what He has done for you in providential things, and even those that have least have got more than they deserve! Let them remember that and, however poor we may be, we shall never be as poor as we were when we were born. We brought nothing into this world. Come as low as we may, we shall have enough to get us into Heaven, depend upon that–just enough manna to last until we get across Jordan and then we shall eat of the old corn of the land that flows with milk and honey!

But God had also promised Jacob that he would bring him back to that place again. And that was another engagement of Providence–that he was to go there and be brought back again–and by this should it be known that He was the God of Bethel. Now this really

looked, at one time, very unlikely. Seven years he had to serve for Rachel and then got Leah instead, so there were seven more years to serve for Rachel. Then there came one year during which he had to be after the spotted sheep, and then another after the streaked, and so on. So it did not look as if he should ever get away from Mesopotamia at all. But God had said that He would bring him back there in peace. Would He do it? Yes, He would drive him out of Laban's house somehow, for return to his fatherland he must.

Yet as soon as he gets out of Laban's house, Laban is after him in hot haste! I do not know what Laban was not going to do–something very horrible, indeed–slay the father and mother with the children? But by the time that he gets close up to Jacob he cannot help himself, his heart is changed. He wants to kiss his daughters and his grandchildren and he has not got any thought of anger in him. God had warned him in a dream not to speak to Jacob either good or bad. So Laban tells Jacob that he is very sorry that he did not know that he was going, for he would have sent him out with mirth and with songs, with music and with harp. Though the truth is, he would not have let him go at all! But God knew how to manage Laban, though Jacob did not.

And when Jacob left Laban's land, Jacob had dwelt there long enough and he was never to pass into it again, for they had left a heap of stones and that reminded them that neither of them was to go over those stones to hurt one another. And they said, "The Lord

watch between us when we are absent from one another." And they did not interfere with one another any more. There are many things in Providence that God will bring to pass in a very mysterious way. He uses trial and trouble full often to compass His wise designs. It is not the winds that blow directly towards the harbor that are always the best for ships. They speed better with cross winds, sometimes, as you might think them not altogether favorable, as some would imagine, because they have a little touch of another quarter in them.

And so it appears to me that the best wind to take a man to Heaven is not the wind that blows due heavenward all the time, as he fondly wishes, but a cross wind that gives you a little chop of sea now and then and makes you feel the stress of anxiety and adversity. The thing a man wishes for his own welfare is not always the most desirable. Full often the deluge we dreaded has brought us a blessing we had not expected! Some sad reverse has issued in a glad result. We had better leave it with God to order all our affairs. Brethren, God manages Providence! You may rest assured of that. He stands in the chariot and holds the reins. Though the steeds are furious, He holds them in with bit and bridle. Nothing happens but what God ordains or permits.

Nothing, however terrible it may seem, can thwart His everlasting purposes of mercy, or turn aside one of His dear children from the eternal inheritance to which He has appointed them all. Rest in the

Lord, for the Lord lives and the Lord reigns. Stay yourselves upon Him! Nothing can hurt you. Make Him your refuge and you shall find a most secure abode and rejoice in the God of Bethel, who is God of Providence.

Next to this, the God of Bethel is the God of the promises. What a many promises He made that night to Jacob! Yet He kept them all. So the God of Bethel is to you and to me the God of promises. The Everlasting Covenant was confirmed to Jacob–"I am the Lord God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac." That meant that He was the God of the Covenant. And the God with whom you and I have to deal is a God who may do as He wills. He is an absolute Sovereign, but He never can do anything but what is right. Nevertheless, He has bound Himself–to speak with reverence–with bonds and pledges to us in the Person of Jesus Christ, saying, "Surely, blessing, I will bless you."

There is a Covenant entered into on our behalf by the Lord Jesus with the Father. It brings to us unnumbered blessings, assuredly and certainly, for God cannot lie and He has given us two immutable pledges that we may have strong consolation and never doubt His faithfulness. Beloved, the God of the promises has appointed your lot and heritage and you shall stand in it at the end of the days. The God of the promises has appeared to you in Jesus Christ and to you, also, has He sworn an oath, therefore you, also, may rest in the blood of Jesus, which makes the Covenant sure. He

has promised never to leave His people. “I will not leave you,” He says to Jacob–and He says the same to you.

He has promised that He will never forget to give what He has declared He will give. “I will not leave you till I have done that which I have spoken of to you.” Oh, blessed Word! I feel as if my mouth were closed and words failed me! The Divine utterance, itself, is so rich, so full of marrow and fatness, that to talk about it seems like gilding gold, or adding whiteness to the lily’s beauty! Only take it home! May the Spirit of God apply it. The God that changes not has made all the promises, yes, and amen, in Christ Jesus to the glory of God by us, and every one of His promises made to Believers shall stand fast and firm, though earth’s old columns bow–“though Heaven and earth shall pass away, neither jot nor tittle of His Word shall fail.”

But time fails me. I must leave this inspiriting meditation just to notice, once more, that the God of Bethel is the God of our vows. Do not forget this, for it is the practical part–the God of Bethel is the God of our vows. You remember, Brothers and Sisters, Jacob vowed that God should be his God. You remember when you made a similar vow?–

“Oh, happy day that fixed my choice
On You, my Savior and my God!
Well may this glowing heart rejoice
And tell its rapture all abroad.

High Heaven that heard that solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

God who gave Himself to us has led us to give ourselves to Him! Now we are not our own, for we are bought with a price. Looking up from the inmost recesses of our sincere hearts we can say, "My God, my Father, You are mine forever and forever." And then Jacob, having made that vow, said–"this stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house." In the fresh gratitude of his heart he made a solemn dedication to the Lord.

And have you not said something like it? Did you not give your house to God when you gave yourself to Him? Have you not given God not only one place to be a Bethel, but have not you asked Him to make your whole life and every place where you are, a Bethel to His name? So it should be, and I trust so it is, for this is true Christianity–not to account this place or that edifice holy, but to make every place, be it your kitchen or your parlor, your bedchamber or your workshop, holy–and the pots and the pans, the implements of your daily calling all holy before the Lord! Is that your vow?

Let it be your daily desire that that vow should be fulfilled–be resolved to live for God, for God ready to die, if need be–never doing anything but what you can ask His blessing! And whether

you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. And doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus, give thanks to God and the Father by Him. This should be true. The other thing that Jacob promised was that he would give a tenth unto the Lord. I do not know whether any of you have made any vow of that kind. I suppose there are few Christians who have not, at some time or other, made a vow of this sort.

Well, Brothers and Sisters, perform your vows unto the Lord! God forbid that we should ever say anything in the heat of emotion, or make any pledge without due premeditation, for God is not to be mocked. When we have once devoted anything unto the Lord, let us not draw back our hand. I have known Christian men who have said, "If the Lord should prosper me till I am worth such-and-such an amount, all that I gain beyond it shall be given as a free-will offering to Him." I know one or two of the largest givers in Christendom who are thus fulfilling the vows they made.

Yet I have also known some persons entangled by their vows. They have had, in perplexity, to ask, "What am I to do? I am in such a position that a larger capital than I ever contemplated is necessary for the carrying on of my business! Yet I have pledged myself to give and call my own no more than a definite sum which I have already in possession." You must take heed how you vow, for you may entangle yourself! Very often it is best not to vow at all. But if in the hour of sorrow you have opened your mouth unto

the Lord, take heed that you do not withdraw from the thing your heart has purposed and your lips have uttered.

Sometimes the Lord directs His people to make some solemn pledge which, otherwise, they might not have done. He does this on purpose, that they may do more for the glory and honor of His name than they have ever done before. I remember one night, when I was about to preach, my subject went from me–my text and every thought about it were gone. It was in a village chapel and I sat there, I know not in what state of trepidation! I breathed my soul to God and there came before me, as in a moment, the face of a certain worthy Brother–a poor man, exceedingly poor–who wanted me to assist him in his education at the College, [Pastors College] but I had not the means just then. I did not know how to do it. I breathed a prayer to God that He would help me. And I promised that that Brother should be taken.

He was one of my earliest students and he has been honored of God and blessed in the conversion of souls for the past 16 or 17 years. I do not think that I should ever have taken him if it had not been for that dilemma of mine. And when I had vowed the vow unto the Lord that I would find the money for him, even if I went without, myself, my sermon came back to me and I preached with pleasure–and I hope with profit! I was glad of my vow and I was able to keep it. Sometimes such things are right. At other times it would be absurd to think of making such a vow! Better to feel that

everything belongs to God, already, and therefore you have nothing to spare to vow with, because you have already consecrated everything that you had from first to last to His Glory!

Yet if you ever do set up an Ebenezer in your pilgrimage, be sure to pour some oil out of your cruse at the time to hallow it, as Jacob did. Then the vows you have ratified will be sweet to look back upon. The God of Bethel, who remembers the vow that you vowed unto Him, will be the more precious unto your soul. I should not wonder if that woman who poured the alabaster box of ointment on Christ's head often thought about what a blessed thing it was that she did. I am sure that there was not one time in all her life that she ever said, "Oh, how handy the money of that alabaster box would come in now. I wish I had not spent it." No, she would think it over oftentimes. Perhaps she became a poor woman afterwards. At any rate, Christ was gone and she would say, "Oh, how glad I am that when the opportunity offered, I seized it."

Though Judas said, "To what purpose is this waste?" she did not care much about Judas. She would say, "I anointed my blessed Master and filled the house with the sweet perfume, and I am glad I did it, and I shall be glad, even, when I see His face in Heaven." So may you often feel! Take no credit to yourself for anything you do. That we could never tolerate. Yet be thankful if the Lord leads you, in His Providence, and enables you, by His Grace, to do something special for Him. It will make you think with all the more sweetness

of the God of Bethel as you read of the way in which God accepts your votive offering, for my text runs like this–"I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar, and where you vowed a vow unto Me."

So the vow is part and parcel of the title which God loves to remember! And He would have us lovingly remember, too. Dear Friends, I am afraid there are some among you who do not know the God of Bethel. Let me tell you that He is the God you need–the God of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the only Ladder for your poor souls to get to Heaven by. This is a Ladder with easy rungs. It is a Ladder strong enough to bear the biggest sinner that ever tried his weight on it! And if you will but come and trust Jesus, you shall go up that Ladder, even to the place where Jehovah dwells in all His purity and you shall be with Him forever and ever! PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON–Genesis 28.

HYMN FROM OUR "OWN HYMN BOOK"–214, 125.

Ge 32:1 • Sa 17:27- Mahanaim, or Hosts of Angels

SERMON 1544

M*ahanaim—Or, Hosts Of Angels*

"And Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim."

Genesis 32:1, 2

LET us go even unto Mahanaim and see these great sights. First, let us go with Jacob and see the two camps of angels and then with David to observe his troops of friends. Jacob shall have our first consideration. What a varied experience is that of God's people! Their pilgrimage is over a shifting sand; their tent is always moving and the scene around them always changing. Here is Jacob, at one time contending for a livelihood with Laban, playing trick against

trick in order to match his father-in-law. Then he prospers and determines to abide no more in such servitude. He flees, is pursued, debates with his angry relative and ends the contention with a truce and a sacrifice. This unseemly family warfare must have been a very unhappy thing for Jacob, by no means tending to raise the tone of his thoughts, or sweeten his temper, or ennoble his spirit.

What a change happened to him when, the next day, after Laban had gone, Jacob found himself in the presence of angels! Here is a picture of a very different kind–the churl has gone and the cherubs have come–the greedy taskmaster has turned his back and the happy messengers of the blessed God have come to welcome the Patriarch on his return from exile! It is hard to realize, to the full, the complete transformation. Such changes occur in all lives but, I think, most of all in the lives of Believers. Few passages across the ocean of life are quite free from storm, but the redeemed of the Lord may reckon upon being tossed with tempest even if others escape. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” Yet trials last not forever–clear shining comes after rain.

Change always works. We pass from storm to calm, from breeze to hurricane–we coast the shores of peace and then we are driven upon the sandbanks of fear. Nor need we be surprised, for were there not great changes in the life of our Lord and Master? Is not His life as full of hills and valleys as ours possibly can be? We read of His being baptized in Jordan and then and there visited by the

Spirit who descended upon Him like a dove–then was His hour of rest. Who can tell the restfulness of Jesus' spirit when the Father bore witness concerning Him, “This is My beloved Son”? But, we read directly afterwards, “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” From the descent of the Holy Spirit to dire conflict with the devil is a change, indeed!

But another change followed it, for when that battle had been fought out and the triple temptation had been tried upon our Lord in vain, we read again, “Then the devil left Him and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.” In a short space our Lord’s surroundings had changed from heavenly to diabolical and again from satanic to angelic. From Heaven to the manger, from walking the sea to hanging on the Cross, from the sepulcher to the Throne–what changes are these! Can we expect to build three tabernacles and tarry in the mountain when our Lord was thus tossed to and fro?

Beloved, you will certainly find that the world is established upon the floods and is therefore ever moving. Never come and go and go and come–and you and I, so far as we have to live in this poor whirling world, must be removed to and fro as a shepherd’s tent and find no city to dwell in. If this happen not to our habitations it will certainly happen in our feelings. From of old “the evening and the morning were the first day” and, “the evening and the morning were the second day.” The alternation of shade and sunshine, of

setting and rising are from the beginning. Dawn, noon, afternoon, evening, darkness, midnight and a new morning follow each other in all things. So must it be–there is a need for clouds and showers and morning glories, "until the day break and the shadows flee away," when we shall be fitted to bask in the beams of everlasting noon.

In the case before us we see Jacob in the best of company. Jacob, not cheated in Mesopotamia, but honored in Mahanaim. Jacob, not trying to outwit Laban, but gazing upon celestial spirits. He was surrounded by angels and he knew it. His eyes were open so that he saw spirits who, in their own nature, are invisible to human eyes. He became a Seer and was enabled by the inward eye to behold the hosts of shining ones whom God had sent to meet him. It is a great privilege to be able to know our friends and to discern the hosts of God. We are very apt, indeed, to realize our difficulties and to forget our helps. Our allies are all around us, yet we think ourselves alone. The opposition of Satan is more easily recognized than the succor of the Lord. Oh to have eyes and hearts opened to see how strong the Lord is on our behalf!

Jacob had just been delivered from Laban, but he was oppressed by another load–the dread of Esau was upon him. He had wronged his brother and you cannot do a wrong without being haunted by it afterwards. He had taken ungenerous advantage of Esau and now, many, many years after it, his deed came home to him and his

conscience made him afraid. Notwithstanding that he had lived with Laban so long, his conscience was sufficiently vigorous to make him tremble because he had put himself into a wrong position with his brother. Had it not been for this, he would have marched on to his father, Isaac's, tent with joyful feet!

Dreading his brother's anger, he was greatly distressed and troubled. These angels came to bring him cheer by helping him to forget the difficulties round about him, or lose his dread of them by looking up and seeing what defense and succor awaited him from on high. He had but to cry to God and Esau's 400 men would be met by legions of angels! Was not this good cheer? Have not all Believers the same? Greater is He that is for us than all they that are against us! If, this morning, I shall be enabled by the Holy Spirit to uplift the minds of the Lord's tried people from their visible griefs to their invisible comforts I shall be glad. I beg them not to think exclusively of the burden they have to carry, but to remember the strength which is available for the carrying of it.

If I shall cause the timorous heart to cease its dread and to trust in the living God who has promised to bear His servants through, I shall have accomplished my desire. The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge and therefore no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper and even the arch-enemy himself shall be bruised under our feet. In treating of Jacob's experience at Mahanaim we will make a series of observations. First, God has a

multitude of servants and all these are on the side of Believers. “His camp is very great,” and all the hosts in that camp are our allies. Some of these are visible agents and many more are invisible, but, none the less, real and powerful. The great army of the Lord of Hosts consists largely of unseen agents–of forces that are not discernible except in vision or by the eyes of faith.

Jacob saw two squadrons of these invisible forces which are on the side of righteous men. “The angels of God met him,” and he said, “This is God’s host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim,” (two camps), for there a double army of angels met him. We know that a guard of angels always surrounds every Believer. Ministering spirits are abroad, protecting the princes of the blood royal. They cannot be discerned by any of our senses, but they are perceptible by faith and they have been made perceptible to holy men of old in visions. These bands of angels are great in multitude, for Jacob said, “This is God’s host”–a host means a considerable number and surely the host of God is not a small one.

“The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels.” We do not know what legions wait upon the Lord, only we read of “an innumerable company of angels.” We look abroad in the world and calculate the number of persons and forces friendly to our Christian warfare, but these are only what our poor optics can discover–the half cannot be told us by such means. It may be that every star is a world, thronged with the servants of God who

are willing and ready to dart like flames of fire upon Jehovah's errands of love.

If the Lord's chosen could not be sufficiently protected by the forces available in one world, He has but to speak or will and myriads of spirits from the far-off regions of space would come thronging forward to guard the children of their King. As the stars of the sky, countless in their armies, are the invisible warriors of God. "His camp is very great." "Omnipotence has servants everywhere." These servants of the strong God are all filled with power–there is not one that faints among them all–they run like mighty men, they prevail as men of war. A host is made up of valiant men, veterans, troopers, heroes, men fit for conflict. God's forces are exceedingly strong–nothing can stand against them. Whatever form they take, they are always potent, even when God's host is made up of grasshoppers, cankerworms and palmerworms, as in the Book of Joel, none can resist them and nothing can escape them.

They devoured everything! They covered the earth and even darkened the sun and moon. If such is the case with insects, what must be the power of angels? We know that they "excel in strength," as they "do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word." Rejoice, O children of God! There are vast armies upon your side and each one of the warriors is clothed with the strength of God! All these agents work in order, for it is God's

host and the host is made up of beings which march or fly according to the order of command. “Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path.” All the forces of Nature are loyal to their Lord. None of these mighty forces dreams of rebellion! From the blazing comet which flames in the face of the universe to the tiniest fragment of shell which lies hidden in the deepest ocean cave–all matter yields itself to the supreme Law which God has settled.

Nor do unfallen intelligent agents mutiny against Divine decrees, but find their joy in rendering loving homage to their God. They are perfectly happy, because consecrated. They are full of delight, because completely absorbed in doing the will of the Most High. Oh that we could do His will on earth as that will is done in Heaven by all the heavenly ones! Observe that in this great host they were all punctual to the Divine command. Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him. The Patriarch is no sooner astir than the hosts of God are on the wing. They did not linger till Jacob had crossed the frontier, nor did they keep him waiting when he came to the appointed rendezvous–they were there to the moment! When God means to deliver you, Beloved, in the hour of danger, you will find the appointed force ready for your succor.

God’s messengers are neither behind nor before their time. They will meet us to the inch and to the second in the time of need, therefore let us proceed without fear, like Jacob, going on our way

even though an Esau with a band of desperadoes should block up the road. Those forces of God, too, were all engaged personally to attend upon Jacob. I like to set forth this thought–"Jacob went on his way and the angels of God met him." He did not chance to fall in with them. They did not happen to be on the march and so crossed the Patriarch's track. No, no! He went on his way and the angels of God met him with design and purpose. They came on purpose to meet him–they had no other appointment. Squadrons of angels marched to meet that one lone man! He was a saint, but by no means a perfect one–we cannot help seeing many flaws in him, even upon a superficial glance at his life and yet the angels of God met him.

Perhaps in the early morning, as he rose to tend his flocks, he saw the skies peopled with shining ones who quite eclipsed the dawn. The heavens were vivid with descending lusters and the angels came upon him as a bright cloud, descending, as it were, upon the Patriarch. They glided downward from those gates of pearl, more famed than the gates of Thebes. They divided to the right and to the left and became two hosts. Perhaps the one band pitched their camp behind, as much as to say, "All is might in the rear, Laban cannot retain; better than the cairn of Mizpah is the host of God." Another squadron moved to the front as much as to say, " Peace, Patriarch, with regard to Esau, the red hunter and his armed men–we guard you in the van."

It must have been a glorious morning for Jacob when he saw not one, but many morning stars! If the apparitions were seen in the dead of night, surely Jacob must have thought that day was come before its time! It was as if constellations mustered to the roll call and clouds of stars came floating down from the upper spheres. All came to wait upon Jacob, on that one man–"The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him," but in this case it was to one man with his family of children that a host was sent. The man, himself, the lone man who abode in covenant with God when all the rest of the world was given up to idols, was favored by this mark of Divine favor. The angels of God met him!

One delights to think that the angels should be willing and even eager, troops of them, to meet one man! How vain is that voluntary humility and worshipping of angels which Paul so strongly condemns. Worshipping them seems far out of the question–the fidelity lies rather the other way–for they do us suit and service and are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them that are the heirs of salvation? They serve God's servants. "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My son?" But this He has said, first, to the Only-Begotten and then to every Believer in Christ! We are the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty and these ministering ones have a charge concerning us! As it is written, "they shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone."

I have shown you that Believers are compassed about with an innumerable company of angels, great in multitude, strong in power, exact in order, punctual in their personal attention to the children of God. Are you not well cared for, oh you sons of the Most High? Those forces, though in themselves invisible to the natural senses, are manifest to faith at certain times. There are times when the child of God is able to cry, like Jacob, “The angels of God have met me.” When do such seasons occur? Our Mahanaims occur at much the same time as that in which Jacob beheld this great sight. Jacob was entering upon a more separated life. He was leaving Laban and the school of all those tricks of bargaining and bartering which belong to the ungodly world.

He had breathed too long an unhealthy atmosphere. He was degenerating–the heir of the promises was becoming a man of the world. He was entangled with earthly things. His marriages held him fast and every year he seemed to get more and more rooted to Laban’s land. It was time he was transplanted to better soil. Now he is coming right away. He has taken to tent life. He has come to sojourn in the land of promise, as his fathers had done before him. He was now to confess that he was seeking a city and meant to be a pilgrim till he found it. By a desperate stroke he cut himself clear of entanglements, but he must have felt lonely and as one cast adrift. He missed all the associations of the old house of Mesopotamia, which, despite its annoyances, was his home.

The angels come to congratulate him. Their presence said, “You are come to this land to be stranger and sojourner with God, as all your fathers were. We have, some of us, talked with Abraham, again and again and we are now coming to smile on you. You remember how we bade you goodbye that night, when you had a stone for your pillow at Bethel? Now you have come back to the reserved inheritance over which we are set as guardians and we have come to salute you. Take up the non-conforming life without fear, for we are with you. Welcome! Welcome! We are glad to receive you under our special care.”

Then was it true to Jacob, “Verily I say unto you, there is no man that has left house, or brother, or sister, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My sake, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions and in the world to come eternal life.” This brotherhood of angels must have been an admirable compensation for the loss of the fatherhood of that churlish Laban! Anything we lose when we leave the world and what is called, “society,” is abundantly made up when we can say, “We have come unto the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in Heaven and unto an innumerable company of angels.”

Again, the reason why the angels met Jacob at that time was, doubtless, because he was surrounded with great cares. He had a large family of little children and great flocks and herds and many

servants were with him. He said, himself, “With my staff I crossed this Jordan and now I am become two bands.” This was a huge burden of care! It was no light thing for one man to have the management of all that mass of life and to lead it about in wandering style. But look! There are two companies of angels to balance the two companies of feeble ones. If he has two bands to take care of, he shall have two bands to take care of him. If he has double responsibility, he shall have double assistance.

So, Brothers and Sisters, when you are in positions of great responsibility and you feel the weight pressing upon you, have hope in God that you will have double succor and be sure that you pray that Mahanaim may be repeated in your experience so that your strength may be equal to your day. Again, the Lord’s host appeared when Jacob felt a great dread. His brother Esau was coming to meet him armed to the teeth and, as he feared, thirsty for his blood. In times when our danger is greatest, if we are real Believers, we shall be specially under the Divine protection and we shall know that it is so. This shall be our comfort in the hour of distress. What can Esau do with his 400 men, now that the hosts of God have pitched their tents and have assembled in their squadrons to watch between us and the foe?

Can you see the horses of fire and chariots of fire around about the chosen servant of God? Jacob ought to have felt calm and quiet in heart and I suppose he was when he saw his protectors. Alas, as

soon as he lost sight of them, poor Jacob was depressed in spirit again about his brother, Esau, lest he should slay the mothers with the children! Such is the weakness of our hearts! But let us not fall into the grievous sin of unbelief. Are we not without excuse if we do so? In times of great distress we may expect that the forces of God will become recognizable by our faith and we shall have a clearer sense of the powers on our side than ever we had before! O Holy Spirit, work in us great clearness of spiritual sight!

And, once again, when you and I, like Jacob, shall be near Jordan, when we shall just be passing into the better land, then is the time when we may expect to come to Mahanaim. The angels of God and the God of angels both come to meet the spirits of the blessed in the solemn article of death. Have we not, ourselves, heard of Divine revealings from dying lips? Have we not heard the testimony so often, too, that it could not have been an invention and a deception? Have not many loved ones given us assurance of a glorious revelation which they never saw before? Is there not a giving of new sight when the eyes are closing? Yes, O heir of Glory, the shining ones shall come to meet you on the river's brink and you shall be ushered into the Presence of the Eternal by those bright courtiers of Heaven who, on either side, shall be a company of dear companions when the darkness is passing and the Glory is streaming over you! Be of good cheer! If you see not the hosts of

God now, you shall see them hereafter when the Jordan shall be reached and you cross over to the promised land.

Thus I have mentioned the time when these invisible forces become visible to faith and there is no doubt whatever that they are sent for a purpose. Why were they sent to Jacob at this time? Perhaps the purpose was first, to revive an ancient memory which had well-near slipped from him. I am afraid he had almost forgotten Bethel. Surely it must have brought his vow at Bethel to mind, the vow which He made unto the Lord when he saw the ladder and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. Here they were! They had left Heaven and come down that they might hold communion with him. I like the dream at Bethel better than the vision of Mahanaim for this reason, that he saw the Covenant God at the top of the ladder–here he only sees the angels. Yet there is a choice pearl in this latter sight, for whereas at Bethel he only saw angels ascending and descending, he here sees them on the earth by his side, ready to protect him from all harm.

How sweetly do new mercies refresh the memory of former favors and how gently does new Grace remind us of old promises and debts. Brother, does not your Mahanaim point to some half-forgotten Bethel? Judge for yourself. Should our glorious God give you, at this time, a clear view of His Divine power and of His Covenant faithfulness, I pray that the sight may refresh your memory concerning that happy day when you first knew the Lord,

when you first gave yourself up to Him and His Grace took possession of your spirit. Mahanaim was granted to Jacob, not only to refresh his memory, but to lift him out of the ordinary low level of his life. Jacob, you know, the father of all the Jews, was great at huckstering–it was his very nature to drive bargains. Jacob had all his wits about him and rather more than he should have had, well answering to his name of "supplanter."

He would let no one deceive him and he was ready at all times to take advantage of those with whom he had any dealings. Here the Lord seems to say to him, "O Jacob, My servant, rise out of this miserable way of dealing with Me and be of a princely mind." Such should have been the lesson of this angelic visit, though it was ill-learned. Jacob was prepared to send off to Esau and call him, "My Lord Esau." He was ready to cringe and bow and call himself his servant. He went beyond the submissiveness which prudence suggests into the abject subjection which is born of fear. The vision should have led Jacob to stand upon higher ground. With bands of angels as his bodyguard, he had no need to persist in his timorous, pettifogging policy.

He might have walked along with the dignified confidence of his grandfather Abraham. There is something better in this life, after all, than policy and planning–faith in God is far grander! A coward's scheming never becomes the favorite of Heaven. Why should he fear who is protected beyond all fear? Esau could not

stand against him, for Jehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of Hosts, was on his side! O for Grace to live according to our true position and character–not as poor dependents upon our own wits or upon the help of man–but as grandly independent of things seen because our entire reliance is fixed upon the unseen and eternal! Jacob as a mere keeper of sheep has great cause to fear his warlike brother, but as the chosen of God and possessor of a heavenly guard he may boldly travel on as if no Esau were in existence!

All things are possible with God. Let us, then, play the man. We are not dependent on the things that are seen. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live. Cursed is he that trusts in man. Trust in God with all your heart. He is your infinite aid. Do right and give up calculations. Plunge into the sea of faith! Believe as much in the invisible as in the visible and act upon your faith. This seems to me to be God's objective in giving to any of His servants a clearer view of the powers which are engaged on their behalf. If such a special vision is granted to us, let us keep it in memory.

Jacob called the name of that place Mahanaim. I wish we had some way in this western world, in these modern times, of naming places, and children, too, more sensibly. We must either borrow some antiquated title, as if we were too short of sense to make one for ourselves, or else our names are sheer nonsense and mean nothing. Why not choose names which should commemorate our

mercies? Might not our houses be far more full of interest if around us we saw memorials of the happy events of our lives? Should we not note down remarkable blessings in our diaries to hand down to our children? Should we not tell our sons and daughters, "There God helped your father, Son." "Thus and thus the Lord comforted your mother, Daughter." "There God was very gracious to our family."

Keep records of your race! Preserve the household memoranda! I think it is a great help for a man to know what God did for his father and his grandfather, for he hopes that their God will also be his God. Jacob took care to make notes, for he again and again named places by the facts which there were seen. Jacob named Bethel and Galeed, and Peniel and Mahanaim and other places, for he was a great name giver. Nor were his names forgotten, for hundreds of years after, good King David came to the same spot as Jacob and found it still known as Mahanaim and there the servants of God of another kind met him, also!

This brings me to my second text. Angels did not meet David, but living creatures of another nature met him who answered the purpose of David quite as well as angels would have done. So just for a few minutes we will dwell upon that second event which distinguished Mahanaim. Turn to the Second Book of Samuel, the 17 th verse. Davidcame to Mahanaim and was met there by many friends. He stood upon the sacred spot accompanied by his handful

of faithful friends, fugitives like he was. There apparently was not an angel about that day, yet secretly there were thousands flying around the sorrowing king.

Who is this that comes? It is not an angel but old Barzillai. Who is this? It is Machir of Lodebar. They bring with them honey, corn, butter, sheep, great basins by way of baths and cooking utensils and earthen vessels to hold their food. And look, there are beds, too, for the poor king has not a couch to lie upon. These are not angels, but they are doing what angels could not have done, for Gabriel himself could hardly have brought a bed or a basin! Who is yonder prominent friend? He speaks like a foreigner! He is an Ammonite! What is his name? Shobi, the son of Nahash, of Rabbah, of the children of Ammon. I have heard of those people–they were enemies were they not–cruel enemies to Israel?

That man, Nahash–you remember his name? This is one of his sons. Yes! God can turn enemies into friends when His servants require succor. Those that belong to a race that is opposed to Israel can, if God wills it, turn to be their helpers! The Lord found an advocate for His Son, Jesus, in Pilate's house–the governor's wife suffered many things in a dream because of Him. He can find a friend for His servants in their persecutor's own family, even us He raised up Obadiah to hide the Prophets and feed them in a cave–the chamberlain to Ahab, himself, was the protector of the saints and, with meat from Ahab's table, they were fed!

It strikes me that Shobi the Ammonite came to David because he owed his life to him. Rabbah of Ammon had been destroyed, and this man, probably the brother of the king, had been spared. This act of mercy he remembered and when he found David in trouble, he acted gratefully and came down from his highland home with his men and with his substance. Many a good man has found gracious help in his time of need from those who have received salvation by his means. If we are a blessing to others, they will be a blessing to us. If we have brought any to Christ and they have found the Savior by our teaching, there is a peculiar tie between us and they will be our helpers. Shobi of Rabbah of Ammon will be sure to be generous to David, because he will say, "It is by him I live. It is through him that I found salvation from death."

If God blesses you in the conversion of any, it may be that He will raise them up in your time of need and send them to help–at any rate, either by friends visible or invisible, He will cause you to dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed. Here comes another person we have heard of before, Machir of Lodebar. That is the large farmer who took care of Mephibosheth. He seems to have been a truly loyal man who stuck to royal families even when their fortunes were adverse. As he had been faithful to the house of Saul, so was he to David. We have among us Brothers and Sisters who are always friends of God's ministers–they love them for their

Master's sake and adhere to them when the more fickle spirits rush after new comers. Happy are we to have many such adherents!

They helped the preacher's predecessor–they like to talk of the grand old man who ruled Israel in the olden times and they are not tired of it. And they are the entertainers of the present leader and are equally hearty in their help. God fetches up these Brethren at the moment they are needed and they appear with loaded hands. Here comes Barzillai, an old man of 80 years and, as the historian tells us, "a very great man." His enormous wealth was all at the disposal of David and his followers and, "he provided the king sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim." This old nobleman was certainly as useful to David as the angels were to Jacob and he and his co-helpers were truly a part of God's forces.

The armies of God are varied–He has not one troop alone, but many. Did not Elisha's servants see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire? God's hosts are of varied regiments, appearing as horse and foot, cherubim and seraphim and holy men and holy women. Those who are of the church of God below are as much a part of the host of God as the holiest angels above. Godly women who minister unto the Lord do what they can and angels can do no more. On this occasion Mahanaim well deserved its name because the help that came to David from these different persons came in a most noble way, as though it came by angels.

The helpers of David showed their fidelity to him. He was driven out of his palace and likely to be dethroned, but they stood by him and proved that they meant to stand by him. Their declaration was in effect, "Your are we, you son of Jesse and all that we have." Now was the time of his need and now he would see that they were not fine weather friends, but such as were true in the hour of trial. See their generosity! What a mass of goods they brought to sustain David's troops in the day when they were hungry and thirsty! I need not give you the details–your verses read like a commissariat roll of demands. Every actually necessary form of provision is there. How spontaneous was the gift! David did not demand–they brought before he asked!

He had not sent his sergeants around to levy upon the outlying villages and farms–there were the good people–ready-handed with all manner of provisions. Their thoughtfulness was great, too, for they seem to have thought of everything that was needed and, besides, they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness." The heartiness of it all is most delightful. They brought their contributions cheerfully and joyfully, otherwise they would have brought only a meager sort and with less variety of gifts. I infer from this that if at any time a servant of God is marching onward in his Master's work and he needs assistance of any sort, he need not trouble about it, but rest in the Lord and help

will surely come, if not from the angels above, yet from the Church below.

Will you look at Solomon's Song, the 6 th verse, "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, thatwe may look upon you. What will you see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies," or Mahanaim, for that is literally how it stands in the Hebrew. In the Church of God, then, we see the company of Mahanaim–the saints are the angels of God on earth as the angels are His hosts above. God will send these upon His errands to comfort and sustain His servants in their times of need. Go on, O David, at the bidding of your Lord, for His chosen servants here below will count it their delight to be your allies and you shall say of them, "this is God's host!"

And now, to close. While I have shown you God's invisible agents and God's visible agents, I want to call to your mind that in either case and in both cases the host is the host of God. That is to say, the true strength and safety of the Believer is his God. We do not trust in the help of angels. We do not trust in the Church of God, nor in 10,000 Churches of God all put together, if there were such, but in only God Himself. Oh, it is grand to hang on the bare arm of God, for there hang all the worlds! The eternal arm is never weary, nor shall those who rest on it be confused. "Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength."

I said last Thursday night to you that faith was nothing but sanctified common sense and I am sure it is so. It is the most common sense thing in the world to trust to the trustworthy–the most reasonable thing in the world to take into your calculations the greatest power in the world and that is God–and to place your confidence in that power. Yes, more, since that greatest power comprehends all the other powers–for there is no power in angels, or in men, except what God gives them–it is wise to place all our reliance upon God alone. The Presence of God with Believers is more certain and constant than the presence of angels or holy men. God has said it–"Certainly I will be with you." He has said again, "I will not leave you, nor forsake you."

When you are engaged in Christ's service you have a special promise to back you up–"Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." What are you afraid of, then? Be done with trembling! Let feeble hearts be strong. What can stagger us? "God is with us." Was there ever a grander battle cry than ours–the Lord of Hosts is with us? Blessed was John Wesley to live by faith and then to die saying, "The best of all is, God is with us." Shrink? Turn your backs in the day of battle? Shame upon you! You cannot, if God is with you, for, "if God is with us, who can be against us?" Or if they are against us, who can stand for an hour? If, then, God is pleased to grant us help by secondary causes, as we know He

does–for to many of us He sends many and many a friend to help in His good work–then we must take care to see God in these friends and helpers. When you have no helpers, see all helpers in God! When you have many helpers, then you must see God in all your helpers. Herein is wisdom. When you have nothing but God, see all in God–when you have everything, then see God in everything. Under all conditions keep your heart only on the Lord. May the Spirit of God teach us all how to do this.

This tendency to idolatry of ours, how strong it is. If a man bows down to worship a piece of wood or stone, we call him an idolater and so he is. But if you and I trust in our fellow men instead of God, it is idolatry. If we give to them the confidence that belongs to God, we worship them instead of God. Remember how Paul said he did not consult with flesh and blood? Alas, too many of us are caught in that snare. We consult far more with flesh and blood than with the Lord. The worst person I ever consult with at all is a person who is always too near me. The Lord deliver me from that evil man, myself! The Presence of the Lord Jesus is the star of our night and the sun of our day! He is the cure of care, the strength of service and the solace of sorrow! Heaven on earth is for Christ to be with us and Heaven above is to be with Christ.

I can ask nothing better for you, Brothers and Sisters, than that God may be with you in a very conspicuous and manifest manner all through this day and right onward till days shall end in the

Eternal Day. I do not ask that you may see angels, still, if it can be, so be it! But what is it, after all, to see an angel? Is not the fact of God's Presence better than the sight of the best of His creatures? Perhaps the Lord favored Jacob with the sight of angels because he was such a poor, weak creature as to his faith. Perhaps if Jacob had been perfect in his faith, he would not have needed to see angels. He would have said, "I need no vision of heavenly spirits, for I see their Lord." What are angels? They are only God's pages to run upon His errands–to see their Lord is far better!

The angels of God are not to be compared with the God of angels! If my confidence is in God, that He is my Father and that Jesus Christ has become the Brother of my soul and that the Holy Spirit dwells in me according to His own Word, why need I care, although no vision of the supernatural should ever gladden my eyes? Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed. "We walk by faith, not by sight," and in that joyous faith we rest, expecting that in time and to eternity the power of God will be with us, either visibly or invisibly, by men or by angels! His arm shall be lifted up for us and His right arm shall defend us.

My heart is glad, for I, too, have had my Mahanaim and in this my hour of need for the work of the Lord to which He has called me I see the windows of Heaven opened above me and I see troops of friends around me. For the Girls Orphanage now to be commenced I see Providence moving! Two camps are around me,

also, and, therefore, do I preach to you this day of that which I have seen and known! May the Angel of the Covenant be always with you. Amen. PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON–Genesis 31:43-55; 32:1, 2; 2 Samuel 17:27-29; Psalm 23.HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”–708, 34, 674.

Ge 32:9-12 • Jacob's Model Prayer

SERMON 3010

Jacob's Model Prayer

You must have noticed, dear Friends, how very frequently God makes the life of a man to be the reflection of his character. There is an echo in the outward experience, to the inward character of the man.

Look at the life of Abraham. He trusted God in a very eminent degree–shall I be incorrect if I say that God also eminently trusted him? The Lord spoke with Abraham as a man speaks with his friend and when He was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" And as Abraham had trusted God in so notable a manner, the Lord entrusted his seed with the oracles of God and with the outward

forms of religious worship, so that it was through the seed of Abraham that the Truth of God was handed on, from generation to generation, until the days of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, next, in contrast to the life of Abraham, take the case of Jacob. He begins life by cheating his brother and, however that cheating may have been overruled so as to fulfill the purposes of God, it was altogether unjustifiable. Now, as he had begun with Esau in that fashion, so he had it returned into his own bosom. When he was with Laban, he was cheated again and again–cheated even in the wife who was given or sold to him. He was a great bargainer–shrewd, crafty, not over scrupulous–the typical father of the Jews, yet you know how he was continually being overreached by Laban who could also bargain on his own account. What a bargaining life it was all through–and what a life of sorrow, although he was still favored of God. His outward experience was the echo of his inward character. As he had done to others, so was it done to him and in him was fulfilled our Lord's declaration which had not then been uttered, "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again."

Also look at Moses, practically renouncing the throne of Egypt by refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter because he esteemed the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt! Yet what did he afterwards become? Was he not king in Jeshurun, with a strange and marvelous power over the

hosts of the Lord and with a greater Kingdom under him, according to the judgment of all who are able to weigh things rightly, than he could ever have had if he had become the ruler of Egypt and the son of Pharaoh's daughter?

I might give you other illustrations of this fact, but I want, rather, to attract your attention to the better side of Jacob's character as we have it revealed in the prayer which I have selected for our meditation on this occasion.

The Chapter from which our text is taken informs us as to the circumstances of Jacob's case at the time that he offered this prayer. He had just escaped from his trouble with Laban when he received the inexpressible honor of being met by "the angels of God." But, lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the Revelations which they made to him, a second trouble followed closely upon the heels of the first. He was soon to meet his brother, Esau, and then the great sin of his earlier years would be brought home to him. He had deceived his old father, Isaac, and had gained the birthright blessing by utterly unjustifiable subtlety–and he might reasonably expect that he was about to reap the due reward of his evil deeds!

With true Oriental craft and also with a considerable amount of common sense, he has various plans for appeasing the wrath of his brother. And then, when he had done what he thought to be wise, he betook himself to prayer. Brothers and Sisters, let us learn from

Jacob's experience to expect troubles, especially if we have so acted as to bring trouble upon ourselves–but let us also learn from Jacob's action that while planning is right enough when kept within its proper bounds, prayer is much more important. We may easily go to excess in our planning. We may depend so much upon an arm of flesh and upon our own wisdom and prudence–and have such confidence in our own scheming that it may, after all, turn out to be utter folly! The staff on which we lean may turn out to be, at best, but a broken reed–perhaps even a spear which shall pierce and wound us. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man"–or to have confidence in ourselves for, even if we had all the wisdom that it is possible for man to attain, it would be but createdwisdom! Whereas, if we go at once to the Lord our God, we shall go to Infinite Wisdom and we may expect to be guided rightly through all the difficulties of the way!

Prayer, my Brothers and Sisters, must be our first resource. But if it is the last, let it be the first as well. Let us not merely go to God's door because we have tried everybody else and failed. Let us not go to the Fountain simply because the cisterns are exhausted, but let us go to our God first and foremost! And let us say, "Even if earth's cisterns did contain water, we would not forsake our God for them. And if all the forces of our fellow creatures were as real and powerful as they profess to be, we would still lean upon the arm

that bears up the whole universe–the unseen arm of the faithful Creator."

I selected this subject for our meditation, on this occasion, because it appears to me to give us a sort of model of whatprayer should beJacob's last pleathe answer to this model prayer of the Patriarch.

First, then, concerning JACOB'S MODEL PRAYER, which is one of the earliest that is recorded in Holy Scripture–at least in such detail.

I commend it for your imitation, my dear Friends, first, because of the plainness of its matter. Jacob does not comebefore God with a long roundabout story, telling in general terms the fact that he was in some sort of trouble, out of which he wished to be Divinely helped, but he distinctly mentions the perilous circumstances in which he found himself. He says, "O God…deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau." Of course God knew that the name of Jacob's brother was Esau, yet Jacob thought it was necessary to mention his brother's name in order that his prayer should be definite and clear. So he pleaded, "Deliver me, I pray you, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children." He was probably then alluding to his dearly-beloved Rachel and her son Joseph, though he may also have referred to the other mothers in the company, for he was a

tender father and cared for his children and he mentioned them as being very near his heart, and especially needing Divine protection. So you see that Jacob is very clear as to what he asks of God–and I urge you, my Brothers and Sisters, to imitate him in this respect.

When we pray, we sometimes use very roundabout expressions. We do not come straight to the point. We seem to imagine that a kind of religious etiquette forbids us from speaking plainly at the Throne of Grace. I am persuaded that this notion is altogether wrong and, instead of God approving this mode of speaking to Him in prayer, He would much rather have us speak to Him as a child speaks to his earthly father–respectfully, reverently, remembering that He is in Heaven and we are on earth–yet simply and plainly, for our Heavenly Father needs no garnishing of our speech and the poor tawdry flowers of eloquence with which some of our Brothers at times adorn their prayers must be displeasing to God rather than acceptable to Him. Especially must you unconverted ones imitate Jacob in this matter of plainness of speech–when you pray, never mind about the mode of your expression, but come to the main point at once. Tell the Lord that you have grievously offended Him and mention your sins by name to Him in private. If your great sin has been drunkenness, call it by that name! If it has been uncleanness, call it by that name! Do not endeavor to dissemble before the Lord, or to cloak your sin before the all-seeing Jehovah! You need not reach for a Prayer Book to see how the bishops

would have you pray, nor borrow somebody's Morning Devotions to see how a certain eminent Divine prayed–but go straight to God and say, "O Lord, You know what I need! I am a poor guilty sinner and I cannot express myself in such a way as to please my fellow creatures, but You know what I am and what I need. Will You graciously give me the pardon of my sin, O You who alone can forgive the guilty? Will You receive me to Your bosom, You blessed Savior of the lost?" Come to the point with God, dear Friends. Be explicit with Him. Let it be seen that you are not praying for the mere sake of performing a certain religious ceremony, but that you have real business to transact with the Most High! You know what your request is and you do not intend to leave the Mercy Seat until your request is granted.

So I commend Jacob's prayer to you because of the plainness of its speech.

Next, it is to be commended for the humility of its spirit. Notice especially these words of the Patriarch, "I am notworthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which You have showed unto Your servant, for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." If you even hint that there is any worthiness in yourself, the power of your prayer is at once destroyed! But if you plead your unworthiness, you will then be standing where the publican stood when he cried, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." And you know how "he went down to his house

justified rather than the Pharisee," who said that he fasted twice in the week, gave tithes of all he possessed, and was not like other men, especially that publican! In that way he destroyed any power that his prayer might otherwise have possessed. His self-conceit tore the chariot wheels from his prayer so that it dragged heavily and soon could not move even an inch! On the other hand, a deep sense of sin, a full consciousness of utter unworthiness will enable you, like Jacob, to wrestle with the great Angel of the Covenant and to prevail over Him. Possibly you have not succeeded with God because you have not sunk low enough before Him. You unconverted ones, especially, if you put your mouths in the very dust, that will be the best attitude for you to assume. If you still have some relics of strength, you will not receive Divine Strength. If there are some remnants of the pristine idea of human merit tolerated in your heart, the robe of Christ's righteousness will not be wrapped around you! Ask the Lord to strip you of every rag of self-righteousness, to enable you to trust in Jesus, alone, and to have no confidence in the flesh–either in the feelings which you experience or in the works which you do! Your time of uplifting will follow close upon your time of falling down flat upon your face. The dawn of day succeeds the darkest hour of the night, so ask God to bring you down to that dark hour in which the night covers every hope that is born of human confidence, for then will

the Lord appear to you in His brightness! So, imitate the prayer of Jacob in its humility of spirit.

The third point in which I would have you copy Jacob's model prayer is in the arguments to be used. The wholeprayer is highly argumentative. If some of the prayers I have heard at Prayer Meetings–though I must say that the fault is less in this place than in most others with which I have become acquainted–if some of the prayers at certain Prayer Meetings were less doctrinal, less experimental and more argumentative with God, they would be more like true prayershould be, for true prayer is just pleading with the Most High, spreading our case before Him, and then pressing our suit with all the arguments we can muster!

In this short prayer of the Patriarch, no less than four arguments are used. The first is the argument from the Covenant–"O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac." God had entered into Covenant relationship with Abraham and made solemn promises to him and to his seed, so Jacob prays, "O Lord, You have pledged yourself to be the God of the seed of Abraham, whose grandson I am, and of the seed of Isaac, whose son I am–now, therefore, by Your faithfulness to Your Covenant promise, help me in this dark hour of my life!" Beloved Friends, this is the kind of plea that we can use with the Lord–"O God, have You not made a Covenant with the Lord Jesus by which You have promised that You will save all them that trust in Him? Have You not said, 'I have

given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people? Then, Lord, though guilty, I trust to the merits of Your dear Son and I ask to be absolved by virtue of His great atoning Sacrifice. Behold, as the earthen vessel hangs upon the nail, so hang I upon Him and upon Him alone. Now, by the Covenant of Your Grace, which is ordered in all things and sure, I beseech You to manifest Your love to me." If you use such gracious pleading as that with the Lord, you will surely prevail with Him. And I urge you, also, children of God, to do the same, for the Everlasting Covenant is a mighty plea with God–

"In every dark distressful hour,
When sin and Satan join their power."

Then we pass on to the next use which Jacob makes of the promise which God had given him–"You said unto me, Return unto your country, and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you." If you and I know that we are walking in the path of duty, if we are where the Lord has bid us go, we can always claim the Divine promise! The Lord is bound to protect His servants when they are in the path of obedience to His commands. If you follow your own counsel, you must manage to take care of yourselves. But if you go where the Bible and the clear indications of Divine Providence guide you, you may always reckon that the Master who sent you will protect His obedient servants, let the dangers of the way be whatever they may. If God should command you to go to the

utmost verge of this green earth, to rivers unknown to song, or if He should bid you travel through distant deserts, as Mungo Park journeyed through the midst of Africa, yet He could preserve your life there, as well as here in England–and being there, sent by Him–you may rest assured that you shall hear the sound of your Master's feet behind you, or have other unmistakable evidences of His Presence with you!

And, Sinner, this is a good plea for you to use. You can say, "Lord, You told me to believe in Jesus Christ, Your Son, then will You not accept me, for His sake, for I have done what You told me to do? You have said, 'Call upon Me in the day of trouble.' Lord, this is a day of trouble with me and I do call upon You, so will You not answer me?" If you argue with the Lord in such a style as this, you will find that this kind of pleading is potent with Him who is Omnipotent.

Then, further, Jacob argued with God from his past history. He said that he was not worthy of the least of God's mercies, yet he had received many of them. Though he went over the river Jordan, when he left his home, a sad and solitary man with nothing but his walking staff in his hand, yet, he had come back with wives and children and so great a number of servants, cattle, camels, goats, sheep and asses that he had become like two bands. "Now, Lord," he said, "after all Your past mercies to me, I beseech You, do not leave me now! Have You blessed Your servant up to this moment

and can You leave him now?" I cannot tell you how often I have been comforted by the Truth of God implied in John Newton's words–

"Determined to save, He watched over my path
When Satan's blind slave, I sported with death!
And can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?
His love in time past forbade me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink.
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through."

So Jacob prayed, in effect, "Lord, You have often been my Helper in the past, so now deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau." You, my unconverted Friend, may ever adopt this form of pleading, for you can say, "Lord, You have saved my life many a time when I have provoked You. Let Your long-suffering, which now leads me to repentance, also move You to forgive my sin. I remember what You did on Calvary for sinners in ages long past. Did you give your well-beloved and only-begotten Son to die for sinners and will You not now accept every trembling sinner who seeks Your favor?" This also shall prove to be the kind of pleading that will cause the gates of God's Grace to open!

The fourth argument that Jacob used was perhaps the best of all–"You said, I will surely do you good," and so on. Ah, that was the masterstroke and, in like manner, if you would succeed at the Mercy Seat, you must bring down the hammer of the promise upon the head of the nail of prayer and then clinch it, as Jacob did, by saying to the Lord, "You said," so-and-so and so-and-so. David once said to God in prayer, "Do as You have said." When a man has promised you something that you really need, you take him by the button-hole and you say to him, "Now, you promised to give me that." And if he is an honest man, you can hold him to his own word–and shall the God of Truth ever fail to perform His promise? No, that is one of the things that God cannot do–He cannot lie and yet cannot run back from His promise, nor does He want to do so. O Christian, if you would get anything from God, find a promise of it in His Word, and then you may count the thing as good as received! When a man of means gives you his check, you count it just as good as hard cash–and God's promises are even better than checks or bank notes! We have only to take them and plead them before Him, and we may rest assured that He will honor them!

II. Thus I have tried to place before you the points in which Jacob's prayer is worthy of both commendation and imitation. And now I want to say something concerning our LAST PLEA which seems to me to be very suggestive–"You said."

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, I need not say more to you upon this matter, for you know the value of the promises of God, and you know how to use them. But to those who are not converted, I may perhaps speak a few words suggested by Jacob's last plea–"You said, I will surely do you good." Sinner, lay hold, as fast as you can, of the promise of God and then plead it with Him. To this end, I would say to every unconverted one here who desires to obtain the priceless blessing of salvation–study the Word of God very diligently and always read it with the view of finding a promise that may suit your special case. And when you read it, study it with the firm conviction that it is God's Word and that, in each promise, God is as truly speaking to you as though He had sent an angel to apply that promise personally to you. Take a text which you find to be applicable to yourself and say, "This is what the Lord says to me as certainly as though He now spoke it in my ear."

Next, I beseech you to remember that God's Word is absolutely true. Fix that fact in your memory and then say to yourself that the promise, being true, must be fulfilled. Next to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great object of faith is the promise of God–and if we were more familiar with His promises, we should more speedily get out of that Slough of Despond in which so many of us flounder so long! Bunyan says that "there are, by the direction of the Lawgiver, certain good and substantial steps placed even

through the very midst of this Slough…but these steps are hardly seen–or if they are, men, through the dizziness of their heads, step besides, and then they are stuck in the mud, notwithstanding the steps are there." Look for these steps of promise, my Friend! There is, in the Bible, a promise just exactly suited to your case, so mind that you find it. Did you ever send for a locksmith to open a drawer because you had lost the key and could not open it? He comes with a great bunch of rusty keys–very much like God's promises which you have allowed to get rusty through not using them–and first he tries one key and then another, and another till, at last, he gets the right one–and the treasures in your drawer are spread open before you! It is just so with the treasures of God's mercy. There is one special promise in Scripture which will fit the words of the lock of your experience–and you must try promise after promise till, at last, you get the right one and then you can say to the Lord, as Jacob did, "You said." That is the main matter–what God has said. Never mind what I say–that does not mean a thing except so far as I say what God says! Never mind what anybody else has said, but let your one concern be to know what God says!

Good Mr. William Jay, of Bath, writing upon this passage, "You said, I will surely do you good," makes four observations which I commend to both saints and sinners. The first is, God has the ability to do you good. Whatevergood it is that you need, God can give it to you. Pardon of sin, help in trouble, comfort in distress,

whatever it is that you really need, God has the ability to give it to you and so to do you good. In the second place, God has the inclinationto do you good. You need not speak to Him as if He were unwilling to bless you–it is according to His Nature to be gracious. Love is one of His chief attributes and His loving kindness and tender mercies greatly abound. He as much delights to show kindness to the needy as a generous man delights to relieve the needs of the poor. In the next place, Godis under an engagement to do you good. "You said, Surely I will do you good." God has given a promise to seeking sinners that He will be found of them. To repentant sinners, that He will pardon them. To believing sinners, that they shall find eternal life. And then, the fourth thing is, God has already done good to you. This fact ought to strengthenyour faith. The Lord has the ability, the inclination and He is under engagement to do you good–and He has already begun to do it!

I may say to you, my Hearers, that the Lord has done you some good in bringing you here to listen to the Gospel and in making that Gospel so sweet and so generous a Gospel as it is–a Gospel for those who labor and are heavy laden, and who can find no rest anywhere else–a Gospel for the very chief of sinners, as Paul wrote to Timothy, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." I put into your hands this plea of Jacob, "You

said, I will surely do you good." Go and plead it and the Lord do unto you according to your faith!

III. My last words which must be very few–concern THE ANSWER WHICH JACOB'S PRAYER RECEIVED.

His prayer was answered, but

it was not answered in the way he expected it would be. When he had done praying, he

found that all his plans had been knocked on the head–so you need not wonder if you find the same thing happen to you when you have done praying! Do not be astonished, my dear Hearers, if, when you have gone to God in prayer, you should seem to feel worse than you did before. There is a young friend–I daresay he is here now–who told me that he came to hear me for many months–that he became outwardly reformed and was, as he thought, going on well, till there came, one Lord's-Day morning, a sermon [Sermon Number 732, Volume 13–THE HEART–A DEN OF EVIL–Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeons.org.] about the corruption of the human heart which knocked all to pieces his pretty castle in the air,upset all his hopes and utterly destroyed his self-confidence! I am very glad it did, for his hopes and trust were all false! And, afterwards, by God's Grace, he began to build upon a far firmer foundation. Sometimes, when you have been praying for salvation, God answers you by destroying all your hopes. You ask Him to save

you, and you think he would do it in a way that would make you happy. But, instead of that, He plucks up all your fine plants by the roots and turns your pretty garden into a desert because He knows that the flowers you were growing were all poisonous and must be cleared away before He can plant those which will be the plants of His right hand planting!

When God answered Jacob, He met him, not as his Friend, but as his wrestling Opponent. Jacob had a fierce duel, which lasted all night long, by Jabbok's Brook. And if God really appears to you, I should not be surprised if He comes at first like an enemy and you will have to say to Him as Job did, "You hunt me as a fierce lion." God's choicest mercies often come to us under the guise of adversities. God sends His love letters to us in black-edged envelopes and sometimes we are afraid to open them. If we would but do so, we should soon know the loving kindness of the Lord. Jacob was to have an answer to his prayer but, before the answer came, he had to wrestle–no, worse than that–before Jacob was fully delivered, he had to be made to limp and all his life afterwards he went halting upon his thigh. You, poor Sinner, may be made to feel your sinfulness so much that you will be driven almost to despair! And you, Believer, will possibly have to fight with Satan as long as you are in this body.

Although Jacob's own plans were put on one side, and God met him as though He were his enemy, and the poor Patriarch went on

limping when the sun rose over Peniel, yet, for all that, he did get his prayer answered! His brother"Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.“ So, Beloved, trust in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, and your enemies shall become your friends, your doubts shall end in joy, your tribulations shall melt away into glory and you shall prove that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

Brothers and Sisters, the pith of the whole matter is this, “Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” As for you who know Him not, I pray you to trust in the Sacrifice of His dear Son, Jesus Christ. As the doves hide themselves in the clefts of the rock, hide yourselves in the wounds of Jesus by trusting in His atoning Sacrifice. And as for you, the saints of the Lord, return unto your rest for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you, therefore, “rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him,” remembering that “they who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.” May the Lord graciously give all of us His blessing and benediction, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

Ge 32:10 • Humility the Friend of Prayer

SERMON 1787

H*umility, The Friend Of Prayer*

"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which You have showed unto Your servant, for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands."

Genesis 32:10

JACOB'S character was far from faultless, but equally removed from despicable. He possessed great strength of character and force of judgment, but this became somewhat of a snare to him, so that he did not always move through life with the childlike repose of Isaac, or the royal serenity of Abraham, but was, at times, crafty and critical like his relatives on his mother's side. Yet I object to that depreciation of Jacob's character which is so common in

certain quarters because he used the means, as well as prayed. Our God is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob–and, very frequently, He is called the God of Israel–and even the God of Jacob. "He is not ashamed to be called their God." And if He is not ashamed to be called Jacob's God, no fellow Believer has any right to be ashamed of Jacob! With all his imperfections–and he certainly had them–he was a noble man.

Some good people are built upon too small a scale to display either good or bad qualities in any high degree–let not such quibble at a great man like Jacob! He has impressed his character upon multitudinous generations and a whole nation bears his lineaments. He was a man full of energy, active, enduring, resolute and, therefore, his infirmities became more conspicuous than they would have been in a quieter and more restful nature. Say what you will of him, he was a master of the art of prayer–and he that can pray well is a princely man! He that can prevail with God will certainly prevail with men! It seems to me that when once a man is taught of the Lord to pray, he is equal to every emergency that can possibly arise. Depend upon it, it will go hard with any man who fights against a man of prayer! All other weapons may be dashed aside, but the weapon of All-Prayer, invisible though it may be, and despised of the worldling, has in it a might and majesty which will secure the victory! The sword of prayer has such an edge that it

will cut through coats of mail. Jacob was a prevailing prince when he was on his knees.

Dr. Ditto, in his admirable, Bible Illustrations, has a chapter upon this chapter which is entitled, "The First Prayer." I take leave to differ a little from that title. This can hardly be said to be the first prayer that is recorded in Scripture. I admit that the excellent writer excludes the prayer of Abraham for Sodom as rather an intercession than a prayer, but there are other prayers of Abraham and other instances of supplication. Yet it may be truly said that this is the first prayer in the Bible of a man for himself which is given at full length. And, being the first, it may be viewed in some degree as a pattern for succeeding pleaders.

If you examine it carefully, you will find that it is a valuable model which may be copied by any child of God in the day of his trouble. Jacob begins by pleading the Covenant–"O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac"–what better plea can we have than the Covenant of a faithful God which He has already fulfilled to our fathers? He next pleads a special promise which had been made to himself. That promise was wrapped up in the folds of a precept which he was obeying–"You said unto me, return unto your country, and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you." While we plead the general Covenant made with all believers in Christ, we may also particularly and especially plead any promise

which has been laid home to our own soul by the Spirit of the blessed God.

Next, he proceeded to plead his own unworthiness. By faith he turned even his faultiness into an argument, as I shall have to show you–"I am not worthy of the least of all Your mercies." Furthermore, he went on to plead with God, stating his special danger–"Deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau." He also set the little children and their danger before God–a strong plea with such a God of Love as we have–"Less he will come and smite me and the mother with the children." Then he concluded with what must always remain a potent plea with God–"You said." He urged God's promise and virtually cried, "Do as You have said." It is wise to spread the promise before Him who gave it and to beg for its fulfillment! We may appeal to God's faithfulness, and cry, "Remember the words unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope."

The very first sentence of Jacob's prayer has this peculiarity about it, that it is steeped in humility, for he does not address the Lord as his own God at the first, but as the God of Abraham and Isaac. The prayer itself, though it is very urgent, is never presumptuous. It is as lowly as it is earnest! I take it that even when Jacob, in his desperation, grasped the Angel and said, "I will not let You go, except You bless me," there was no undue familiarity in his holy boldness. There was an extraordinary courage and an invincible

determination–but it was of the kind which God approves–otherwise He would not have blessed him there. No man wins a blessing through a sinful act towards God!

Throughout this prayer I see, with all its intensity, a loving remembrance of who Jacob is, and who Jehovah is–and the suppliant speaks in terms fit to be used towards the thrice holy God by a man of lowly heart. This is to be the subject of our discourse–humility is the fit attitude of prayer. We will begin with that–"I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which You have showed unto Your servant." Then we will advance, in the second place, to remark that humility is promoted by the same considerations which encourage prayer–that I shall show you from the text. And thirdly, humility suggests and supplies many arguments which can be used in prayer. A proud man has few reasons to bring before God–but the humbler a man is, the more numerous are his prevailing pleas. Prayer is a suitable employment for a sinner–and a sinner is the best person to exercise prayer.

Our first observation is that HUMILITY IS THE FIT ATTITUDE OF PRAYER. I do not think that Jacob could have prayed unless he had stripped off the robes of self-justification which he wore in his controversy with Laban–and had stood disrobed before the infinite majesty of the Most High. Observe that he here speaks not as before man, but as before God, as he cries, "I am not worthy of the least of all Your mercies." He had been talking with Laban–Laban

who had made a slave of him, who had used him in the most mercenary manner–and who had now pursued him in fierce anger because he had left his service with his wives and children that he might go back to his native country. To Laban he does not say, “I am not worthy of what I possess,” for, as far as churlish Laban was concerned, he was worthy of a great deal more than had ever been rendered to him in the form of wages.

To Laban he uses many truthful sentences of self-vindication and justification. Laban’s substance had greatly increased under Jacob’s unceasing care. He cared for Laban’s flocks with constant diligence and, he says, “In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from my eyes.” He declares that he had never taken a ram of the flock with which to feed his own family; that he had, in fact, for many years worked with no wages except the daughters who became his wives. And he goes the length of saying, “Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely you had sent me away now empty.” The same man who speaks in that fashion to Laban, turns round and confesses to his God, “I am not worthy of the least of all Your mercies.” This is perfectly consistent and truthful. Humility is not telling falsehoods against yourself–humility is forming a right estimate of yourself. As towards Laban, it was a correct estimate for a man who had worked so hard for so little, to claim that he had a right to what God had given him. And

yet as before God, it was perfectly honest and sincere of Jacob to say, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which You have showed unto Your servant.”

Now, whenever you go to prayer, if you have previously been compelled to say some rather strong thing as to your own integrity and industry or, if you have heard others speak in your praise, forget it all–for you cannot pray if it has any effect upon you. A man cannot pray with a good opinion of himself–all he can manage is just to mutter, “God, I thank You that I am not as other men are,” and that is no prayer at all! A lofty view of your own excellence will tempt you to look down with contempt upon your neighbor–and that is death to prayer. God drives out of His Temple all proud prayers! He cannot endure such provocations! You must take your shoes off when you stand on holy ground–those same shoes which are quite light for you to wear when you have to tread upon the lion and the dragon–those same shoes which fit you well and which befit you to wear when traveling through this great and terrible wilderness. Take off, before your God, even that which you are forced to wear before churlish men!

When we see Jesus, we say of Him, “whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose.” “Lord, I am not worthy,” is our cry. Like Abraham, we acknowledge that we are but dust and ashes–less than the least of all saints–honored only by being allowed to discharge any menial function in our Master’s house! See, then, that it was

essential for Jacob to get into his right attitude after having disputed with Laban. It was fit that in lifting his eyes to Heaven, he should use the most humble language and by no means pretend to any merit in the Presence of the thrice Holy One. BrothersandSisters, it would ill become any of as to use the language of merit before God, for we have no merit! And if we had any, we would not need to pray!

It has been well observed by an old Divine that the man who pleads his own merit does not pray, but demands his due. If I ask a man to pay me a debt, I am not a suppliant, but a plaintiff claiming my rights. The prayer of a man who thinks he is meritorious is like serving the Lord with a writ–it is not offering a request–it is issuing a demand. Merit, in effect, says, "Pay me what You owe me." Little will such a man get of God, for if the Lord only pays us what He owes us, yonder place of torment will be our speedy heritage! If, while living here, we receive no more than we deserve, we shall be offcasts and outcasts! The meanest of mendicants obtain more than their deserts. Even life, itself, is a gift from the Creator! "Why does a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" Let us be brought low as we may, we still must admit that "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." Any other attitude but that of humility would be most unbecoming and presumptuous in the Presence of the Most High.

Let me add, also, that in times of great pressure upon the heart, there is not much fear of self-righteousness intruding. Jacob was greatly afraid and sorely distressed. And when a man is brought into such a state, the most humble language suits him. They that are filled with bread may boast, but the hungry beg. Let the proud take heed lest while the bread is yet in their mouths, the wrath of God comes upon them. He that is brought to penury; he that is distressed in spirit; he that lies at death's door is not a man to show the peacock's feathers and display his finery! Then he looks about him to the loving kindness of the Lord and he pleads for mercy. This is his one cry–"Mercy, mercy!" He finds that he cannot pray until he has come to his true standing as an undeserving one. And, having reached that, he has a firm foothold, for he pleads the absolute sovereignty of Divine Grace and the boundless love of the Divine heart as substantial arguments for mercy!

I am persuaded that in our prayers we fail, at times, because we do not get low enough. Only on your face before the Throne will you prevail. If you have any righteousness of your own, you shall never have Christ's righteousness. If you have no sin, you shall have no washing in the precious blood! If you are strong, you shall be left to your own weakness. If you are rich and increased in goods, you shall be sent away empty. But when you can truly confess your nothingness and lie low before God, He must hear you. "Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord." No prayers

speed better in the heights than those which rise from the depths! When you are naked, the Lord will clothe you. When you are hungry, He will feed you. When you are nothing, He will be your All in All, for then it is that He will win glory to Himself and His mercies will not be perverted to feed your pride. When our mercies magnify the Lord, we shall have many of them, but when we use them for the magnifying of ourselves, they will depart from us. See, then, dear Friend, how necessary it is that we should approach the Lord in the attitude of humility.

I call your attention to the present tense as it is used in the text– Jacob does not say, as we might have thought he would have said, "I was not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have made to pass before Your servant," but he says "I am not worthy." He does not merely allude to his unworthiness when he crossed this Jordan with a staff in his hand–a poor solitary banished man–he believes that he was unworthy then and, even now, looking upon his flocks and his herds and his great family, and all that he had done and suffered, he cries, "I am not worthy!" What? Has not all God's mercy made you worthy, Jacob? Brothers and Sisters, Free Grace is neither the child nor the father of human worthiness! If we get all the Grace we can ever get, we shall never be worthy of that Grace, for Grace, as it enters where there is no worthiness, so it imparts to us no worthiness afterwards as we are

judged before God! When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants–we have only done what it was our duty to have done!

I cannot stand the man who, in his foolish prattle about his own perfection, talks as if he had become worthy of Grace. The Lord have mercy upon such boasters and bring them to the true moorings, so that they may admit that they are not worthy! When you and I shall get to Heaven, though God may say, "They shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy," yet it will never be right for any one of us to say that we are worthy of anything that God has bestowed upon us! Our song must be, Non nobis Domine–"Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Your name give glory, for Your mercy, and for Your truth's sake."

To touch the praise which comes to us through the operations of Divine Grace, even with our little finger, were treason against the Most High! To assume, for a moment, that we deserve anything of the Lord God, is so vain-glorious, so false, so unjust that we ought to loathe the very thought of it, and cry like Jacob, "I am not worthy!" Job, who had defended himself with vigor and possibly with bitterness, no sooner heard God speaking to him in the whirlwind than he cried, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Why I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Prostrate before the Throne is the proper attitude of prayer–in humility is our strength for supplication.

II. Secondly, the same thought will be kept up, but put in a somewhat differing light, while we note that THOSE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH MAKE TOWARDS HUMILITY ARE THE STRENGTH OF PRAYER. Observe, first, that Jacob, in this prayer, showed his humility by a confession of the Lord's working in all his prosperity. He says with a full heart, "All the mercies and all the truth which You have showed unto Your servant." Well, but Jacob, you have immense flocks of sheep and you earned them. And through your care they greatly increased–do you not consider that those flocks are entirely your own procuring? Surely you must see that you were highly industrious, prudent, careful and thus grew wealthy?

No! He takes a survey of his great estate and he speaks of it all as mercies–mercies which the Lord had showed unto His servant! I do nor object to books about self-made men, but I am afraid that self-made men have a great tendency to worship him that made them. It is very natural they should. But, Brothers and Sisters, if we are self-made, I am sure we had a very bad maker and there must be a great many flaws in us! It would be better to be ground back to dust and made over anew so as to become God-made man! Listen, O proud self-made mortal! What if you have earned everything–who gave you strength to earn it? What if your success is due to your shrewd sense–who gave you skill and foresight? What if you have been frugal and industrious, yet why were you not left to be as prodigal

as others and to waste in riot what God bestowed on you? Oh, Sir, if you are lifted an inch above the dunghill, you should bless God for it, for it is from the dunghill you have come!

God helps His servants while they are weak. But when they fancy themselves strong, He frequently humbles them. When we cry, "Behold this great Babylon that I have built," God may not cast us off, but He will cast us down. He did not cast off Nebuchadnezzar, but He did allow him to lose his reason and mingle with the beasts of the field. If we act brutishly, the Lord may allow us to become like beasts in other matters. The use of our reasoning powers is a gift of heavenly charity which should lead us to deep gratitude–but never induce in us pride as to our superior abilities! If we are out of Bedlam we ought to bless the Lord in the humblest manner. Shall we dare to glory in our talents? Shall the axe boast against him that hews with it? Shall the net exalt itself against the fisherman who drags the sea with it? That were, indeed, a folly–a God-provoking folly! Inasmuch as God does so much for us, we ought to be humbled by the weight of obligation which love heaps upon us.

This may also yield us a hold upon God in prayer, for now we can say, "Lord, You have done all this for me! It is plain that Your hand has been in all Your servant's happiness–let your hand be with me, still." Oh, self-made man, when you have made yourself, can you keep yourself and preserve yourself in being? And do you hope to get to Heaven and throw up your cap and say, "Hosanna to

myself"? Do you reckon upon such vain-glory? If you seek your own glory, you shall find no place in that city where God's Glory is the all-pervading bliss of the place. So, then, that which tends to keep us humble, also becomes an assistance to us in our prayers.

The next point is a consideration of Goads mercies. For my part, nothing ever sinks me so low as the mercy of God. And, next to that, I am readily subdued by the kindness of men. When the clarion rings out for battle, I will stand foot to foot with him that dares encounter me–and all the man within me is awakened to the conflict–but when all is peace and quiet, and everyone wishes me well, I wonder at their kindness, and I sink into my shoes with fear lest I should act unworthily in any way. The man who has a due sense of his own character will be laid low by words of commendation. When we remember the loving kindness of the Lord to us, we cannot but contrast our littleness with the greatness of His love, and feel a sense of self-debasement. It is written, "They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it." The words are true to the letter.

Take a case–Peter went fishing and if he had caught a few fish, his boat would have floated high on the lake. But when the Master came into the boat and told him where to throw the net so that he pulled up a multitude of fish, then the little boat began to sink! Down, down, it went and poor Peter went down with it till he fell at Jesus' feet and cried, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O

Lord." He was confused and overwhelmed, or he would never have asked the blessed Master to leave him–Christ's goodness had fairly beaten him till he was afraid of his Benefactor! Know you not what it is to be weighed down with infinite goodness, oppressed with mercy, swept away by an avalanche of love? I, at least, know what it means and I know of no experience which has made me so little in my own eyes! I feel less than the least of all His mercies! I shrink and tremble in the presence of His bounty! If ever providential goodness does this, you may be sure that redeeming love will be even more effectual!

Here is a proud sinner, boasting of his own righteousness. You cannot get his self-glorying out of him, but, by-andby, he learns that the Son of God gave His life to redeem him, poured out His heart upon Calvary's Cross, the Just for the unjust, to bring him to God–and now he is of another mind! No man could ever think that he deserved that the Son of God should die for him! If he does think so, he must be out of his mind! Dying love touches the heart and the man cries, "Lord, I am not worthy of a drop of Your precious blood! I am not worthy of a sigh from Your sacred heart! I am not worthy that You should have lived on earth for me, much less that You should have died for me." A sense of that wondrous condescension which is the highest commendation of God's love, that in due time Christ died for the ungodly, brings the man down upon his knees, dissolved by the mercies of God!

Now, if there is any man here who has a good hope through Grace that by-and-by he will be with God in Heaven–if he will meditate upon the Beatific Vision, if he will picture to himself the crown upon His head and the palm branch in His hand, and himself enjoying the everlasting hallelujah–

"Far from a world of grief and sin,

With God eternally shut in,"

why, the next thing he will do is sit down and weep that this can be possible! Such a poor, useless, sinful soul as I am–can I be glorified, and has Jesus gone to prepare a place for me? Does He give me His own assurance that He will come again and receive me to Himself? Am I a joint-heir with Christ and a favored child of God? This makes us lose ourselves in adoring gratitude. Oh, Sirs, we can never open our mouth again in the way of boasting! Our pride is drowned in this sea of mercy!

If we had a little Savior, and a little Heaven, and little mercy, we might still hang out our flags. But with a great Savior, and great mercy, and a great Heaven, we can only go in, like David, and sit before the Lord and say, "Why all of this for me?" I have a dear Brother in Christ who is now sorely sick, the Rev. Mr. Curme, the vicar of Sandford in Oxfordshire, who has been my dear friend for many years. He is the mirror of humility and he divides his name into two words, Cur me? which means, "Why me?" Often did he

say, in my hearing, “Why me, Lord? Why me?” Truly I can say the same, Cur me?–

“Why was I made to hear Your voice
And enter where there’s room,
While thousands make a wretched choice
And rather starve than come?”

This exceeding kindness of the Lord all tends to promote humility and, at the same time, to help us in prayer, for if the Lord is so greatly good, we may adopt the language of the Phoenician woman when the Master said to her, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.” She answered, “Truth, Lord. Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.”

So we will go and ask our Lord to give us crumbs of mercy–and they will be enough for us poor dogs. God’s crumbs are bigger than man’s loaves and if He gives us what to Him may be a crumb, it shall be a meal to us. Oh, He is a great Giver! He is a glorious Giver! We are not equal to His least gift! We cannot estimate His least mercy, nor describe it fully, nor praise Him for it sufficiently! His shallows are too deep for us! His mole-hill mercies overtop us! What shall we say of His mountain mercies?

Again, a comparison of our past and our present will tend to humility and, also, to helpfulness in prayer. Jacob, at first, is described thus, “With my staff I passed over this Jordan.” He is all alone, no servant attends him. He has no goods, not even a change

of linen in a parcel–nothing but a staff to walk with. Now, after a few years, here is Jacob coming back, crossing the river in the opposite direction. And he has with him two bands. He is a large grazier, with great wealth in all manner of cattle. What a change! I would have those men whom God has prospered never to be friend who preserved the tree axle of the truck in which he wheeled home his goods when he first came to London. It was placed over his front door and he never blushed to tell how he came up from the country, worked hard, and made his way in the world.

I like this a deal better than the affected gentility which forgets the lone half-crown which pined in solitude in their pockets when they entered this city. They are indignant if you remind them of their poor old father in the country, for they have discovered that the family is very ancient and honorable! In fact, one of their ancestors came over with the Conqueror! I have never felt any wish to be related to that set of vagabonds, but tastes differ, and there are some who think that they must be superior beings because they are descended from Norman freebooters. Nobodies suddenly swell as if they were everybody! Observe that Jacob does not say, “Years ago I was at home with my father, Isaac, a man of large estate.” Nor does he talk of his grandfather, Abraham, as a nobleman of an ancient family in Ur, of the Chaldees, who was entertained by monarchs.

No, he was not so silly as to boast of aristocracy and wealth, but he frankly admits his early poverty–"With my staff, a poor, lonely, friendless man, I crossed this Jordan, and now I am become two bands." It humbles him to think of what he was, but, at the same time, it strengthens him in prayer, for, in effect he pleads, "Lord, have You made two bands of me that Esau may have the more to destroy? Have You given me these children that they may fall by the sword?" So again I say–that which humbled also encouraged him–he found his strength in prayer in those very things which furnished motives for lowliness!

III. And now, as time flies, we must dwell upon the third point, still hammering the same nail on the head–TRUE HUMILITY SUPPLIES US WITH ARGUMENTS IN PRAYER. Look at the first one, "I am not worthy of all Your mercies." No, "I am not worthy of the least of all the many mercies which You have showed unto Your servant. You have kept Your Word and been true to me, but it was not because I was true to You. I am not worthy of the truth which You have shown to Your servant." Is there not power in such a prayer? Is not mercy secured by a confession of unworthiness? The man whom Christ most of all commended, as far as I remember, was he who used this very language. The centurion came to Christ and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof"–yet this was he of whom the Lord said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

Depend on it, if you want Christ's commendation, you must be lowly in your own esteem, for He never praises the proud! But He does honor the humble. Since the Lord was thus gracious to him when he was unworthy, had not Jacob splendid ground to stand upon while he wrestled with God and cried, "Deliver me from Esau, my brother, though because of the wrong I did him I am not worthy of such deliverance"? We are always afraid, in our time of trouble, that God will deal with us according to our unworthiness–but He will not. We say to ourselves, "At last, the sins of my youth have come home to me. Now I shall be dealt with according to my iniquities!"

But Jacob virtually said, "Lord, I never was worthy of the least thing that You have done for me. And all Your dealings with me are in pure Grace. I stand still where I always must stand–a debtor to Your sovereign undeserved favor! And I appeal to You–since You have done all this for me, an undeserving one, I beseech You, do yet more! I have not changed, for I am as undeserving as ever, and You have not changed, for You are as good as ever. Therefore still deliver Your servant." This is mighty pleading with the Most High!

Then please notice that while Jacob thus pleads his own unworthiness, he is not slow to plead God's goodness. He speaks in most expressive words, wide and full of meaning. "I am not worthy of the least of all Your mercies. I cannot enumerate them, the list would be too long! It seems to me as if You have given me all

kinds of mercies, every sort of blessing. Your mercy endures forever and You have given it all to me." How he extols God as with a full mouth when he says, "All Your mercies." He does not say, "all Your mercy"–the word is in the plural–"the least of all Your mercies." God has many bands of mercies–favors never come alone–they visit us in troops! All the trees in God's vineyard are full of branches and each branch is loaded with fruit! All the flowers in God's garden bloom double–and some of them bloom sevenfold!

We have not only mercy, but mercies numerous as the sand! Mercy for the past, the present, the future! Mercy to temper sorrows, mercy to purify joys! Mercy for our sinful things, mercy for our holy things. "All Your mercies"–the expression has a vast acreage of meaning! He does not know how to express his sense of obligation except with plurals and universals! The language is so full, I could never exhibit all its meaning! He seems to say to the Lord, "Because of all this great goodness, I pray You go on to deal well with Your servant. Save me from Esau, or all Your mercies will be lost! Have You not, in Your past love, given pledge to me to keep me even to the end?" Mercy and truth all through the Bible are continually joined together–"All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth." "God shall send forth His mercy and His truth." These two gracious ones grasp hands in Jacob's prayer–"All Your mercies and all Your truth!" Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if you would

wrestle with God and prevail, use much these two master arguments–mercies and truth! These are two keys which will open all the treasures of God! These are two shields behind which you will be out of reach of every fiery arrow! That which made Jacob humble also made him strong in prayer. Gratitude for mercy made him bow before God, but it also enabled him to grasp the Angel with the hand of believing importunity!

Notice, next, how he says "Your servant." A plea is hidden away in that word. Jacob might have called himself by some other name on this occasion. He might have said, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which you have showed unto Your child." It would have been true. It would not have been fitting. Suppose it had run–"Unto Your chosen"? It would have been true, but not so lowly. Or, "unto Your covenanted one"–that would have been correct, but not so humble an expression as Jacob felt bound to use in this time of his distress, when the sins of his youth were brought to his mind. He seemed to say, "Lord, I am Your servant. You did bid me come here and here I have come because of that bidding–therefore protect me." Surely a king will not see his servant put upon when engaged in the royal service!

Jacob was in the path of duty and God would make it the path of safety. If we make God our Guide, He will be our Guard. If He is our Commander, He will be our Defender. He will not permit any Esau to smite with the sword one of His Jacobs! When we fully

cast ourselves upon the Lord by a believing obedience, we may depend upon it that He will bear us up and bear us through! Masters are commanded to give unto their servants that which is just and equal–and we may be sure that our Master in Heaven will do the same to each of us who serve Him. Jacob was in danger through His service and, therefore, the Lord's honor was pledged to see him through. It may seem a small thing to be a servant, but it is a great thing to plead in the hour of need! So David used it–"Make Your face to shine upon Your servant." "Hide not Your face from Your servant; for I am in trouble." "O my God, save Your servant who trusts in You." These are but specimens of the ways in which men of God used their position as servants as an argument for mercy.

Jacob had yet another plea which showed his humility and that was the argument of facts. "With my staff," he says, "I passed over this Jordan." "This Jordan," which flowed hard by and received the Jabbok. It brings a thousand things to his mind, to be on the old spot again. When he crossed it before, he was journeying into exile. But now he is coming back as a son to take his place with loved Rebekah and father Isaac–and he could not but feel it a great mercy that he was now going in a happier direction than before. He looked at his staff and he remembered how, in fear and trembling, he had leaned upon it as he pursued his hasty, lonely march. "With this staff–that is all I had." He looks upon it and contrasts his

present condition and his two camps with that day of poverty, that hour of hasty flight!

This retrospect humbled him, but it must have been a strength to him in prayer. “O God, if You have helped me from abject need to all this wealth, You can certainly preserve me in the present danger. He who has done so much is still able to bless me and He will do so.”–

“Can He have taught me to trust in His name

And thus far have brought me to bring me to shame?”

Does God mock men? Does He encourage their hope and then leave them? No, the God that begins to bless, perseveres in blessing and, even to the end, continues to love His chosen!

In closing, I think I discover one powerful argument here in Jacob’s prayer. Did he not mean that although God had increased him so greatly, there had come with it all the greater responsibility? He had more to care for than when he owned less. Duty had increased with increased possessions. He seems to say, “Lord, when I came this way, before, I had nothing–only a staff–that was all I had to take care of. And if I had lost that staff, I could have found another. Then I had Your dear and kind protection, which was better to me than riches. Shall I not have it now? When I was a single man with a staff, You did guard me. And now that I am surrounded by this numerous family of little children and servants, will You not spread Your wings over me? Lord, the gifts of Your

goodness increase my need–give me proportionately Your blessing! I could, before, run away and escape from my angry brother–but now the mothers and the children bind me and I must abide with them and die with them unless You preserve me."

My Brothers and Sisters, at this hour I know how to use this same plea! To me, every advance in position among men means more obligation to serve my Lord and bless my generation! I need more Divine Grace or my failure will be the more shameful! Unworthy as we are of all this blessing, yet we dare not trifle with it and refuse to serve our God with all our powers. The more oxen–the more plowing has to be done! The broader the fields–the more laboriously must we sow. The larger the harvest–the more industriously must we reap! And for all this we need much more strength. If God blesses and increases us in talent, or in substance, or in any way, ought we not to conclude that the larger trust involves greater responsibility? Thus our life's task grows sterner, more difficult and we are driven more than ever to our God!

This is our argument–"O Lord, You have imposed upon me a wider service! Give me more Grace! In Your goodness You have committed more talents to him that had 10 talents–will You not give more help to put all out to interest for Your name's sake?" Yes, Brother, as God lifts you up, take care that you bow lower and lower at His feet. Consecrate even more entirely your whole being unto God! Be thankful if your pound has gained one pound and, if

He does more for you, be restless till His five pounds have gained five more pounds. Let the goodness of God, instead of becoming a cloak for your pride, or a couch for your sloth, be an incentive to your industry, a stimulus to your zeal! May it help your humility, but, at the same time, encourage your confidence when you draw near to God in prayer, to feel how largely you are under obligations to serve the Lord.

Come, dear Friends, the Lord has been mindful of us as a Church and He will bless us! We have obtained, through our Lord Jesus and His Spirit, blessings so large that I can say in your name we are not worthy of the least of all these mercies! Shall we not use them to God's Glory? Yes, more than ever–for we are determined to pray more, to believe more and to work more–and to be more full of courage and dauntless resolve that the name and the truth of Jesus shall be made known wherever our voice can be heard! As long as tongues can speak and hearts can beat, God helping us, we will live for Jesus our Lord! We are what Rutherford would call, "drowned debtors"–let us be living lovers! Our ships have gone down in a sea of love till mercy rolls over our topmasts. So be it! So be it! We are swallowed up in an abyss of love! My figure describes us as sinking, but in very truth it is thus we rise by being filled with all the fullness of God! With a full heart I pray for you, Beloved. God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen. PORTION OF SCRIPTURE

READ BEFORE SERMON–Genesis 32.HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”–PSALM 103 (VERSION II), 705, 214.

Ge 32:11 • Jacob's Fear and Faith

SERMON 2817

Jacob's Fear And Faith

" Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And You said, I will surely do you good, and make your seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude."

Genesis 32:11,12

JACOB is the type of a Believer who has too much planning and scheming about him. He is a wise man according to the judgment of the world. Put him down by the side of Laban and if his relative tries to stint him in his wages and to cheat him in all manner of ways, you will see that Jacob, in the long run, will get even with

Laban. He seems to have been able to deal, even with that con-man, quite as sharply and not to come off second best in the bargain! Abraham never descended to any of the tricks by which Jacob sought to increase his flocks. He lived like a princely man in simple, childlike confidence in God, willing to be injured rather than to seek his own interests, letting Lot, though a younger man, choose the best part of the land and being quite content to take whatever remained. Because God was with him as his portion, he had no hunger after anything else. He was worth fifty thousand of such kings as the king of Sodom and though he had a right to the spoils of war, he waived them, saying, "I will not take from a thread even to a shoelace. I will not take anything that is yours lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.'"

Jacob, if he had been in such a case, would have looked very closely after all the threads, the shoelaces and all the other things that he had captured in the war. He would have said that God gave them into his hands and he would take good care to preserve them. Among worldlings, Jacob would be regarded as a much more sensible man than either his grandfather Abraham, or his father Isaac. But when you come to weigh him in the balances of the sanctuary, although he was a great and good man, and a man of such force of character that he is reproduced in his descendants, even to the present generation, yet, for all that, the weakness of his character lay in the human strength of that character–his power to

plot and plan makes him appear as a much smaller and feebler man in the eyes of those who can judge spiritually,than Abraham, his forefather was.

I suppose Jacob's bargaining faculty came from his mother and she got it from her brother, Laban, and Laban, with his niggardly ways, was enough to infect the whole family. Rebekah, in that artful plot by which she deceived her blind old husband and taught her son to rob his elder brother of his father's blessing, showed that the same vein was in her–and that she belonged to that plotting, scheming stock. And the mother's character was strongly manifested in her son Jacob. Hence it is that you find him getting into all manner of trouble. Abraham had his trials and one great supreme trial, but, as a summary of his life, it is written, "The Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." And everybody feels that Abraham's life was a most desirable one. It is such a life as we might, any of us, wish to live. But Jacob's life is not a desirable one. At one time he is bargaining with his famished brother about a mess of red pottage–a transaction which we cannot approve. Then, afterwards, we find him joining with his mother in deceiving his poor old father. It is noteworthy that he who had deceived his father, Isaac, was himself deceived by his uncle, Laban! Such conduct is generally repaid into our own bosoms–our chickens come home to roost and we get back for ourselves what we thought we had given away to others. Jacob's own summary of his life, as

he gave it to Pharaoh, was, “Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been,” so full were they of sorrow and trial. I may say of him as was said of many of David’s mighty men, “Nevertheless, he attained not unto the first three.” There he stands, accepted and blest, for he was a man of faith, but the very strength of his character, as I have already reminded you, was the proof of its weakness and caused him many sorrows.

Our text introduces Jacob to us just before that memorable night by the brook Jabbok. He was expecting his brother Esau to come with a troop of 400 men, perhaps to slaughter the whole company. The Patriarch’s state of mind is a mixture of fear and faith. He doubts, yet he believes! He has much distrust, yet he does confide in God, at least to some extent. As two hosts met him, so he, himself, was the representative of two hosts. Solomon says in the Canticles, “What will you see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.” So was it with Jacob. There were both nature and Grace, belief and unbelief, fear and faith battling together in his soul. What a picture he is of many of us in whom a perpetual warfare is being waged between the Law of Grace and the Law that is by nature in our members–between the heavenly principle that cannot die, and cannot sin–and the old nature which is always struggling for the mastery and making us often cry out, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

I am going, first, to speak about JACOB'S FEAR as we have it mentioned in our text–"I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children."

My first observation is that Jacob, in his fear, is not to be held up as an example to us. He is not to be commended forthus fearing Esau and neither are we to imitate him in this respect. My next remark will, perhaps, seem strange to you, but I ask you to weigh it well and consider it carefully. There is a great deal that Christians feel which they never ought to feel. There are a great many things that Christians do which they never ought to do and there are many places into which Christians go into which they never ought to go. It was so with the ancient Believers and especially with Jacob. His experience is the experience of a good man, but it is not, in all respects, the experience that a good man ought to have. Why should he have been filled with fear at the prospect of meeting his brother? There was no reason for it–his grandfather Abraham would not have had any such fear–and if Jacob had possessed more Divine Grace, he would not have said, concerning Esau, "I fear him." He knew that God had given him the blessing which Esau despised–again and again had the Lord appeared to him–and he must have known that he was blessed in a way that Esau was not. Why, then, should he fear his brother?

Should the elect of God be afraid of one who has neither part nor lot in the matter? Should he not rather feel that the son of the King

of kings must not fear the child of Satan, the heir of wrath? The friends of the wicked Haman said to him, “If Mordecai is of the seed of the Jews, before whom you have begun to fall, you shall not prevail against him, but shall surely fall before him.” And well may Mordecai stand upright in the king’s gate and never bow his head before Haman! Why should he fear and tremble even though Haman has the ear of the king? Mordecai has the ear of the King of kings, so he need not be afraid of anything Haman could do!

Jacob’s fear was wrong, first,

because it followed immediately after a great deliverance. He had left his father-in-law,

Laban, in haste. He had stolen away by night and Laban had hurried after him. Encumbered as Jacob was with so numerous a company which included so many young children and so much cattle, he had to move very slowly–and Laban soon overtook him. He was boiling over with rage when he started and meant to do desperate things, but God interposed and made him put the sword into the scabbard, so that, instead of there being any slaughter, there was as kindly a state of feeling between the two as could be expected under the circumstances. After God had preserved His servant Jacob from the wrath of Laban, it is strange that he should have been afraid of Esau. He has been delivered once, cannot he expect to be delivered again? He has just been rescued from one peril, yet he trembles in the prospect of another!

Do you know anybody who ever acted in that way? If you do not, I do. I know where he lives. I will not say that I live with him, but I will confess, with sorrow, that I have sometimes been that very person. Have you also been one of the same sort of persons? If so, I will not say what I think of you, "How foolish I am to act thus! Howbasely am I acting towards my Lord!" He who has been with us, never changes–what He has done once, He will do again. Is His arm shortened, or His eye blinded, or His heart turned to stone? No! Then surely we ought to have learned by experience to trust in God, even as Jacob ought to have learned from his experience so fresh in his memory and trusted the Lord concerning Esau as He had delivered him from the wrath of Laban!

Another thing that tended to make Jacob's fear inexcusable was that the angels of God had met him just before. Thechapter from which our text is taken, tells us, in its opening verse, that, "Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him." Messengers from the eternal Throne of God came to salute God's favorite! And, I suppose, to escort him back to the land that was given to his fathers by a Covenant that could not be broken. The Patriarch was attended, before and behind, or on the right hand and on the left, by two companies of angels, yet he says, "I fear Esau." Even in the society of those who must have borne a perfume of Heaven upon their wings, standing in the midst of immortal spirits whose faces must have reflected the Glory of their Lord and Master, Jacob says,

“I fear Esau.” Again I ask, Did you ever know anybody act in such a fashion as this? Perhaps you say, “I never saw any angels.” No, but you have, by faith, seen the great Angel of the Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ, and you have had most intimate communion with Him. At His Table, how often has He revealed Himself to us in the breaking of bread? And in the reading or hearing of His Word, how often has He been set forth before us as our Heavenly Bridegroom, the Beloved of our soul? And, sometimes when we have been quite alone, the bright light of His Presence has surprised us and our hearts have burned within us while He has communed with us. Well, then, it has been very shameful on our part if, afterwards, we have feared Esau, or have been afraid of some anticipated trouble, or fearful because of bodily pain, or, perhaps, put out of temper by some trifling matter in the household which should have been altogether beneath our notice as companions of the Lord of the angels! The Lord have mercy upon His servants and forgive our unbelieving fear, for which we will not pretend to make any excuse!

Note, concerning Jacob’s fear, that it probably arose out of the recollection of his old sins. Old sins, like old sores,are very apt to break out again. The very mention of the name of Esau brought up before his mind the day when his mother cooked the “two good kids of the goats,” and took his brother’s goodly raiment, put it on Jacob and put the skins of the kids upon his hands and his neck,

that he might deceive his father into the belief that he was his "very son Esau." Jacob remembered all that and felt that Esau had good reason to be angry, for he had supplanted him twice, and done him grievous wrong. He was afraid of Esau on the principle that "conscience makes cowards of us all." A sin may be forgiven by God, yet, for all that, its sting may be felt by you 50 years afterwards, just as, perhaps, some of you may have had a bone broken in your boyhood and had it very well set, yet, sometimes, before bad weather, you feel a twinge that reminds you that bone was once broken. Thus it was with Jacob–that old bone began to creak and to threaten that bad weather was coming. If he had dealt fairly and justly with Esau–and left the Lord to settle that matter of the birthright as He had always intended to give it. If he had left God to arrange everything in His own way, and had not been so wise, in his own estimation, like his clever, scheming mother, he would not have been afraid to meet Esau as he now was!

Well, dear Friends, perhaps some old sin is the cause of your fear. If so, I pray you to remember that one sin ought not to lead you to commit another, or to be an excuse for committing another. Suppose that, in your early days, you did sin in a certain fashion, or that, in your later days, you have transgressed in some other way? Should you, therefore, doubt your God? You should be humble in the remembrance of your sin, but you should not, therefore, mistrust the Most High! He is always faithful, whatever we may

have been. He did not, at the first, receive us as innocent, but as guilty–yet He saved us. As we look back upon the past, we may well mourn our guiltiness, but let us not doubt our salvation if we have believed in Jesus! Even when God's people get themselves into trouble, it is very remarkable how He delivers them. They ought to be careful as to how they walk before Him, but even when they are not, and their folly brings them into a net, yet does He come and tear the net in pieces–and the poor captive bird escapes out of the snare of the fowler. Even when we willfully wander from Him, the Lord graciously restores our souls, blessed be His name! Do not, therefore, let the remembrance of our past guilt lead us into any doubt concerning the fidelity of Him who has cast all our sins into the depths of the sea and who will never allow them to be again laid to our charge.

There is this which is commendable to be said about Jacob's fear–it led him to prayer. What was he doing when hesaid of his brother Esau, "I fear him"? O Brothers and Sisters, if you ever say the same thing, mind that you get to the same place where Jacob was and say it, as he said it, to his God! It is ill to say it at all, but if it is said, it is well to say it to the Lord. Go to Him with whatever troubles you have and unburden your souls at the Mercy Seat. If there is any suspicion or mistrust in your mind or heart–dark and black though the thought may be–yet go and tell Him all! He knows all about it, for He reads your heart, yet go to Him and lay it

all before Him and ask Him to cleanse it all away. To go and tell our doubts to our fellow creatures is like spreading an infectious disease–it does not often bring us any comfort–and it frequently causes others to have more distrust who had quite enough of their own before. We ought not to be slack in prayer, for we are ready enough to tell our neighbors all about our trials and troubles, though they cannot help us!

Note, also, that JacobThat was a good thing. “I am not worthy,” he saidto the Lord, “of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have showed unto Your servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan and now I am become two bands.” It is a blessed thing, sometimes, to look back upon our past history in order to revive our confidence in God at the present time. It never does to rely only upon the past and to say, “God favored me at such-and-such a time and, therefore, I am His.” No, you need present mercy–as you cannot liveon the meat you ate long ago–so you cannot exist on only past mercy. Yet, as I have reminded you, you may have seen how the bargemen on the canal push backward to send the boat forward–and you may push backward with your experience in order to send the boat of your life forward in new confidence in God.

I do not speak only for myself when I say that if we will review our lives from the first day until now, we shall be again surprised at

the wonderful loving kindness of the Lord towards us. Jacob speaks to the Lord, “of all the mercies,and

all the truth, which You have showed unto Your servant.“ Now, if anybody could have foretold, 20 years ago, to some of you, that you would be in such a good position as you are now in, you would have been filled with delight at the prospect, yet, perhaps, you are not now happy in the possession of it. And if you could have foreseen all the mercy which God has strewn in your pathway, you would have jumped for joy! Yet you do not jump for joy now as you look back upon it. Is not that wrong? Oh, when I think of what the Lord has done for me, personally, I reckon that I would be the very chief of sinners if I should ever mistrust Him again! I can say, and so can you, my Brothers and Sisters in Jesus–

"

When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,

Has gathered thick and thundered loud,

He near my soul has always stood,

His loving kindness, oh, how good!"

Then, why should any of us ever say, in unbelief–

"

He?

Beloved Friends, think of the places from which the Lord brought some of you. It is not so very long ago since you were living in sin–perhaps in the worst forms of sin–without hope and without

God in the world. Had you died as you were then, where would you have been? Yet now you are numbered among the Lord's children and you have enjoyed much of His love and been highly favored by Him! I charge you by the abounding mercy which you have received–let these present fears that now molest you, be driven from your bosom!

Furthermore, Jacob was also led to seek out the promise that was most suitable to his case, for he said, "I fear Esau,that he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children." Now notice how appropriate was the promise that he quoted to meet the case–"And You said, I will surely do you good, and make your seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." Now, if the father is killed and the mother and the children are killed, how can Jacob's seed be as the grains of sand upon the seashore which cannot be counted? He had a good hold upon his God when he quoted that promise and, Beloved, it may be the same in your experience. You never know the preciousness of the promises till you realize your need of them. You may not know what keys the locksmith has in his possession. Possibly he does not know, himself, how many he has. But if you lose the key to your door, you send for him and he comes with a great bunch of keys–and he tries one, and another, and another, and another till, at last, he finds one that will fit. God's promises are often so little studied by His people that they are like a great bunch of rusty keys till we really

need them! And then we turn them over and we say, of some particular promise, “That just meets my case. Blessed be the name of the Lord, it must have been made on purpose for me! That key fits all the wards of this lock.” And then you begin to prize the promise.

It is, I think, worthy of note that God had not said to Jacob, in so many words, “I will surely do you good.” At least,as far as the Scriptures are concerned, there is no record of any such promise. But He had said to the Patriarch, “I am with you,” and, “I will not leave there.” So, this is Jacob’s version of the promise and it is a true one, too, because if God says, “I am with you,” he means, “I will do you good.” Have you ever heard Brothers pray, in the Prayer Meeting, “Lord, You have promised that where two or three are gathered together in Your name, You will be in the midst of them and that to bless them and do them good”? Well now, that last part is what they have tagged on to our Savior’s words. He did not say, “and that to bless them and do them good,” because it was not necessary to say that. If the Lord is in the midst of them, He must bless them and do them good! So Jacob felt that if the Lord had not put it in just those words, He implied it when He said, “I am with you.” How could the Lord be with him except to do him good? That was his translation of the original text which came out of God’s lips–and that is what the Lord really meant by it. Jacob had gone below the surface and spied out the hidden meaning–and if

you should ever be able to see more in a promise than is in it, it is in it! I seem to contradict myself by that paradox, yet it is true. If the Word of the Lord should, in its literal construction, not actually contain all that your faith can see in it, yet over every promise there is this Law of God written, "According to your faith, be it unto you." And you may rest assured that your faith will never outrun the promise of God! He will keep His promise, not only to the letter, but to the fullest possible meaning that you can impart to it!

II. But I must not say any more about Jacob's fear, or I shall have no time for speaking about HIS FAITH. Yet I have been speaking about it while I have been talking concerning his fear.

First, JacobHe mentioned his fear of Esau and then he turned to the Lord,saying, "You said, I will surely do you good." Oh, what a hold he had of God! "'You said.' You cannot lie and You said, 'I will surely do you good.' You cannot go back from Your word and, 'You said, I will surely do you good.'" He seems to hold God to it as men hold their fellow men to a promise which they have given. There is nothing that he can see in which he can trust. God seems to be doing nothing, to be quite still–yet Jacob reminds Him of His promise, "You said." The promise is sufficient for Jacob without any act or deed as yet. "You said, You said, I will surely do you good."

I must also remind you that

this was what Jacob said when he began to pray. If you turn to his prayer, you will see

that he began by saying, “O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which said unto me,” and so on. That is the beginning of his prayer and the end of it is, “And You said.” That should always be both the beginning and the ending of prayer. You must never go beyond God’s promises. If He has said anything, that is enough for you, but do not expect that your whims and fancies will be indulged. You must begin your prayer by saying to God, “You said,” and when you do that, the weakest saint or sinner may plead so as to prevail. You can never get a stronger plea than the Lord’s own promise! You can never strike a blow that will more effectually clinch the nail than this, “You said. You said.”

O Brothers and Sisters, I scarcely know how to put this matter before you as I ought, because if God says a thing, who is there among us who shall dare to give Him the lie? If it was years ago that He said it. If it is an old promise, even in the oldest book of the Old Testament, yet there is no such thing as time with God–one day is with him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day–and the promise is just as good as if He had made it at this very moment! If you could hear God speak now, you would not doubt Him, would you? Well, but did He at any time utter this promise? Then it stands fast forever, for He has never spoken in secret so as to change what He has said in public! Every promise of God is sure

to all those who put their trust in Him. Jacob's faith rested, in its beginning and its end, upon the promise of God–this was the basis of it, and this alone. Can you say that this is the foundation of all your confidence for time and for eternity? If you can, is it not a basis worth resting upon, a foundation fit to build upon? Is there any supposable weight which this Rock cannot sustain? Is there any imaginable trouble which may not be endured while God's great solemn promise stands forever fast?

Yet Jacob's faith, while it was resting upon the promise of God, was, nevertheless, a struggling faith. It was a mixture of, "I fear Esau" and, "You said." Beloved, have you only a struggling faith? Then, struggle on! Never give up struggling. If your faith is only like Jacob's wrestling, wrestle on, for, notice that Jacob, when he had said to the Lord, "You said," and quoted the promise, stopped praying, for he was satisfied to leave the case there. So, Brothers and Sisters, if your faith begins only as struggling faith, it is the nature of it to increase and grow till, at last, it comes to be victorious faith! Pray for victorious faith. Ask the Lord to give you the confidence that will not be daunted, the unstaggering faith of Abraham, who, though he was as one dead and his wife far advanced in years, yet knew that God had promised him a son and, therefore, believed that he would have a son–and looked for him without a doubt! And then, when God bade him take Isaac and slay

him, he believed that God would even raise him up from the dead, but, somehow or other, He would keep His promise.

Beloved, believe anything except that God can lie. Believe any miracle, any impossibility, or that which ungodly men tell you is an inability. Take it all in, but never let the thought come into your mind that God can be false to you! Oh, if we only believed God as He deserves to be believed, we should be able to move mountains and cast them into the sea! Nothing is impossible to the man to whom it is impossible to doubt his God. A mighty faith, though it is not, in itself, omnipotent, yet lays hold upon the Omnipotence of God and girds itself with Divine strength. Does not the Lord deserve such a faith from us? Yet we shall never have it unless He gives it to us! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would work it in us, preserve it in us and perfect it in us till faith is lost in sight–and hope is changed to full fruition! Never let us doubt the living God for a single moment.

The Lord bless you, dear Friends, and especially bless any of you who have not yet believed in His Son, Jesus Christ! Oh, that they could see the sinfulness of doubting the great God and Jesus Christ, His Son! Oh, that they would but trust Him and confide in Him just as they are! They would never have to lament doing so, but, throughout eternity they would have to bless the Lord who taught them this sweet way of life and peace, namely, the way of simple dependence upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ!

Ge 32:12 • The Master-Key, Opening the Gate of Heaven

SERMON 1938

T*he Master Key—Opening The Gate Of Heaven*

"And You said, I will surely do you good."

Genesis 32:12

THE possession of a God, or the non-possession of a God, makes the greatest possible difference between man and man. Esau is a princely being, but he is "a profane person." Jacob is a weak, fallible, frail creature, but he has a God. Have you not heard of "the mighty God of Jacob"? There are many wise, careful, prudent men of the world who have no God and, truly, these in the highest sense, like the young lions, lack and suffer hunger, for their highest nature is left to famish. Those who wait upon the Lord are often very simple and devoid of ability and policy, but they shall not lack any

good thing–their highest nature is well supplied from heavenly sources. This is the great difference between the two races which people the world–I mean the sons of men who say in their hearts, "No God," and the sons of God, the twice-born, who have received new life and, therefore, with heart and flesh cry out for God, even the living God!

The child of this world enquires, "Where shall I flee from His Presence?" The child of Light cries, "O God, You are my God; early will I seek You." There are thus two races of men who can never blend, either in this life or in that which is to come. Deep in their innermost nature lies a vital difference–they are of two distinct seeds. My dear Hearers, you can divide yourselves without difficulty by this rule–Have you a God, or have you none? If you have no God, what have you? If you have no God, what good have you to expect? What, indeed, can be good to you? If you have no God, how can you face the past, the present, or the future?

But if you have God for your portion, your whole history is covered! The God of the past has blotted out your sin; the God of the present makes all things work for your good; the God of the future will never leave you nor forsake you! In God you are prepared for every emergency. O Man, if the God of Jacob is your God, you shall be safe at night, though you may sleep as unguarded as the Patriarch at Bethel. And you shall be secure by day, though you may be met by Esau with his 400 men! You are safe in

banishment though Laban is churlish–and safe in the midst of foes, though Canaanites thirst for your blood–for the Lord has said, "Touch not My anointed and do My Prophets no harm." It matters not where you go if the God of Israel is with you and says to you, "Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will go down with you; and I will also surely bring you up again." He shall guard you from all evil–the Lord shall preserve your soul.

Because Jacob had a God, therefore he went to Him in the hour of his trouble. He did not know how he should escape from his injured and angry brother, Esau. In fact, he believed that Esau had come on purpose to cut him up, root and branch, and so, after doing the best he could, Jacob looked to his best Friend and Helper, and cried unto his God! He who has a God will be sure to fly to Him in his distress. There is no use in having a God if you do not use Him. I am afraid that many professed Christians place their God afar off and never dream of going to Him for practical succor in the hour of danger. As well have no God, as have an unreal God who cannot be found in the midnight of our need! But what a blessing it is to be able to go to our God at all times and pour out our hearts before Him–for our God will be our Helper and that right early! He is our near and dear Friend in joy and in sorrow. Poor Jacob, in the calmer days of his life, had failed to walk with his God as his father, Abraham, had done. But now a storm has overtaken him and he

flies to the Lord, his God, as a mariner puts into port to escape the tempest.

Dear Friend, are you in trouble at this time and have you a God? Then go to Him in prayer at once and spread your case before Him. Have you a Rabshakeh's letter in the house? Go, like Hezekiah, and spread it before the Lord! Have you a dying child? Then cry to the Lord as David did! Are you in the deeps with Jonah? Then let your prayer arise from the very bottoms of the mountains! Have you any bitterness in the vessel of your heart? Then pour it out before Him.

Make good use of your God and especially gain the fullest advantage from Him by pleading with Him in prayer. In troublous times, our best communion with God will be carried on by supplication. Tell Him your case–search out His promise and then plead it with holy boldness. This is the best, the surest, the speediest way of relief.

What would some of us do if we had not a God to go to? Though we are not tried and troubled as some men are–and God has set a hedge about us–yet there are times in our life when we should die of a broken heart if we could not tell our griefs to God! Like Job, we could curse the day of our birth and wish that we had never been born if we were utterly bereft of God. We would look forward to annihilation as a hopeful thing if we could not speak with God, our evergracious Friend. But when we can get away to Him and tell out the whole matter–and lay hold upon Him by the hand of faith

and plead His promise–then the darkened cloud withdraws and we come out into the light, again, and sing, "This God is our God forever and ever! He will be our Guide even unto death."

Beloved, we see that Jacob had a God and that he made use of Him in prayer, but the point I want to call your attention to, at this time, is that the stress, the force, the very sinew of Jacob's prayer consisted in his pleading the promise of God with God. When he came to real wrestling with the Lord, he cried, "You said." That is the way to lay hold upon the Covenant Angel–"You said." The art of wrestling lies much in a proper use of, "You said." Jacob, with all his mistakes, was a master of the art of prayer–we justly call him, "wrestling Jacob." He said, "I will not let You go." He gets grip for his hands out of this, "You said." With this he lays hold upon his unknown antagonist–a desperate hold which he will not relax, even though his sinew are made to shrink.

"You said" is a good grip with which to hold an honest man and not less does it lay hold on our faithful God. This will have power over any honest person, for he that speaks truly will not run back from his promise. When we come to pleading terms with God, there is nothing that so helps us as to be able to quote the promise and plead, "You said." In handling my text, which was Jacob's prayer, I shall notice, first, that it ought to be our memorial, secondly, that it is God's bond and, thirdly, that, therefore, we may make it our plea.

First, it ought to be OUR MEMORIAL. I mean, dear Friends, that we ought to remember, much more than we do, what God has said. If we had a silent God who, to this age had never revealed Himself by actual speech. If it were given out at this hour that now, for the first time, God was about to make a promise, how eagerly would all God-fearing men desire to hear it–and how carefully would they treasure it up! Why, every syllable would be more precious than a pearl! The very tone of the utterance would be mystic music full of meaning. You would charge your memory to embalm each word–no, to preserve each syllable in all its living force and beauty. Whatever else you forgot, you would lay up every letter of the newly-spoken promise in the archives of your soul. Ought we not to treat God's Word with equal reverence, though spoken ages ago, since it is a fact that He has spoken it?

The Lord has often spoken from the foundations of the world by His Prophets–and in these last days by His Son–and we are bound to jealously guard every single Word which He has thus given to us. He has preserved His own Words in the Scriptures–let us preserve them in our hearts. No subjects in the world can be so worthy of the consideration, the memory and the reverence of man as those upon which his Maker has deigned to give instruction. The choicest communications ever made to human minds are those which have come from the great Father. I ask you, therefore, Brothers and Sisters, if I say not rightly that God's Divine, "You

have said" should be our memorial? We should lay up His Word in our hearts as men lay up gold and gems in their vaults–it should be as dear to us as life itself. My heart stands in awe of God's Word, but I am sorrowful because so many trifle with it. No good can come of irreverence towards Scripture–we ought to cherish it in our heart of hearts.

We ought to do this, first, with regard to what God has said. You notice that Jacob puts it, "You said," and then he quotes the words–"Surely I will do you good." It is an essential part of the education of a Christian to learn the promises. I always admire that fact in the life of General Gordon, who, whatever mistakes he made, was a grand Believer–a very Abraham among us in these latter days–that he always carried with him that little book called Clark's "Precious Promises," which is an arrangement of the various promises of the Old and New Testaments under different heads. The General used to consult that collection of Divine promises and seek out that holy text which best suited his particular condition. Then he sought solitude and pleaded before the Lord that Inspired Word, believing that it was true and that the Lord would do as He had said. By faith he looked for an answer and acted upon it! He went down through the Sudan alone, as you know, daring all manner of dangers because he believed in God. The heroism of his life grew out of his confidence in the promises. If we would be heroes, here is the food with which to sustain a noble life!

I would have all Christian people know God's promises. If you had in your house a number of checks which you believed to be good, I do not suppose that you would long be unaware of their nature and value. No merchant here would say, "I have a number of bills, drafts and checks at home somewhere–I have no doubt that they are all good and that they are my lawful property–but I do not know much about them. Their value is quite unknown to me." Such ignorance would argue insanity! Will you know your earthly wealth and never consider your heavenly riches? In the Bible there are "exceedingly great and precious promises"–shall it be said that some of God's children do not know what those promises contain? They have read them, perhaps, but they have never really searched into their meaning to see what God has promised. Of many good things provided for them, they are quite ignorant. And even in reference to their personal and present trouble they are not aware of what the Lord has promised to do for them in such a case! What a pity it would be for a trader to be short of money and to have a draft for a large amount, but not know where to find it! It would be a poor way of doing business, would it not?

Is it not a shameful thing to be dealing with God in a like slovenly fashion? Brothers and Sisters, I would that we studied God's Word much more. We read all sorts of books, but many of them are unprofitable. As for a great part of current literature, one might as well open his mouth and eat the east wind, for there is nothing that

can stay his soul therein. One single sentence from God is worth all the books of the Alexandrian library, or of the Bodleian! All that has been consumed of human literature and all that still exists, if put together, would not equal one book of the Bible! O my Hearer, get to know what the Lord has said and you will be on the way to wisdom! Within the compass of, "It is written," lies Infinite Truth! If you are well instructed in it, it shall be well with you.

Moreover, Jacob also knew when God had spoken a promise, for he quotes twice the fact that God had spoken to him and said so-and-so. It is clear that he knew when the promise was spoken. I have often found peculiar comfort, not only in a promise, but in noticing the occasion for its being made. I have observed the condition of the man to whom God gave the promise and I have gathered much instruction from it. Sometimes the frame of a picture is almost as beautiful as the painting, itself, and so the occasion of the promise may be as instructive as the promise itself. The conditions under which the Lord uttered it may be so similar to our own, that they may cause the Word of the Lord to come with special comfort to our hearts. "Surely," you say, "God, who spoke thus to Jacob, or thus to Daniel, or thus to Paul, finding me in the same condition, speaks, also, thus to me, for the promises are not of private interpretation. They are not allotments hedged in for individuals, but they are a wide and open common which is the undisputed property of all Believers. They are not confined to those

to whom they were first spoken, but they reach also to us who are fellow-heirs with them."

Brethren, take pains to know what God has promised and to know when God has promised it. Note well both matter and date. These are flowers from which the bee of meditation will suck much sweetness.

There is another matter which is important for us to know, namely, to whom God made the promise. Jacob knew to whom it was spoken. He tells us in a previous verse that God had spoken a certain promise to him. "Which said unto me, Return unto your country, and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you." A promise that was made to another man will be of no service to me until I can discover that I, being in the same condition as that other man, being of like character as that other man, and exercising like faith as that other man, stand before God in the same position as he did and, therefore, the Word addressed to him is spoken, also, to me! Brothers and Sisters, I entreat you continually to study God's Word to see whether the promise is made to your character and condition–and so is made to you as much as if your name were written upon it!

Many and many a time has God brought a promise home to my own heart with such freshness that I have felt that the Bible was made on purpose for me. Yes, I have been sure that the promise was written for me, if for no other man that ever lived! When a

man sees a garment left at his door which fits him exactly and is evidently cut to suit certain peculiarities of his form, he concludes that the garment was meant for him. Even so, in many a promise I see certain private marks which are the exact counterparts of the secrets of my soul–and these show that God meant me when thus and thus He spoke!

Beloved, I say to you, one and all, study much the promises of God's Word! Have them at your fingertips. Remember what things God has said to men and when He has said them–and to what kind of men He has said them–and discover, by this means, how far He has said them to you! Let this, indeed, be the forefront of your knowledge. If you cannot read the stars, yet read the promises. If you cannot study the stone book of geology, yet know the Rock of Ages and the declarations engraved thereon. If you remain a stranger to the deep things of metaphysics and philosophy, yet at least know the household privileges of the family of God. Dear child, know what your Father has said! It will be very sad if you do not. Happy heir of Heaven, know what it is to which you are an heir according to the promises and the Covenant.

Thus much upon the duty of making God's Word to live in your mind and memory.

II. Secondly, "You said, I will surely do you good"–this is GOD'S BOND.

Nothing holds a man like his word and nothing so fully fixes the course of action of the Lord our God as His own promise. We speak with the deepest reverence in reference to the great God, but it would not be reverence if we said less than this–that God has bound Himself to be true to His Word. He can do all things, but He cannot lie. If God had made no promise, He would have been free to act, or not to act–but by His promise He engages Himself to act in a certain way–and He will do so. From the necessity of His Nature, He will be faithful.

What a mighty thing, then, is a promise, since it is a bond which holds God Himself! How does it do so?

I answer, it holds Him, first, by His Truth. If a man says, "I will," it is not in his power, without a breach of truth, to refuse to make good his word. If a promise is made by one man to another, it is considered to be a matter of honor to fulfill it. Unless a man is willing to tarnish his honor and disgrace his truthfulness, he will certainly do as he has solemnly promised to do. Alas! Many persons think lightly of truthfulness–they even dare to swear lightly. And what do we think of such people? To utter solemn promises and then to disown them is not the way to be esteemed and honored. It can never be so with God. None can impeach His veracity. None shall ever be able to do so. Has He said and shall He not do it? Has He given His Word and will He not make it good?

Learn, then, when you are praying to God–whether you are saint or sinner–to take the promise and say, “O my God, You have bound Yourself to give me this blessing, for You have said that You will do so and I know You cannot lie! I am sure that You will do even as You have said, for You are a God of truth!” The promise is God’s gracious bond, since His truthfulness cannot be put in question.

But, next, he who enters into an engagement is bound to keep his word or he is considered to be vacillating and changeable–the Lord is, therefore, held by His Immutability. He is God and changes not. We hear persons say, “I have changed my mind,” but God is of one mind and who can turn Him? Change is written upon all human things, but listen to the Eternal–“I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, today and forever,” and all the promises are yes and amen in Him. The great Father of Lights is “without variableness, or shadow of turning.” When the Lord made His promise, He foresaw every possible contingency and He made His promise with a determination to stand to it. Ages make no difference to Him. His promise is as fresh and unfading as when first He caused it to delight the eyes of His chosen!

This is fine pleading. You can fall upon your knees and cry, “Lord, here is Your promise; be graciously pleased to fulfill it! I know that You have not changed and that Your Word is not withdrawn. You have never run back from Your Word and You

never will–therefore fulfill this Word unto Your servant, whereon you have caused me to hope." An unchanging God is the foundation of happiness to the Believer!

But sometimes men make a promise and they are unable to fulfill it from lack of power. Many a time it has cost honest minds great grief to feel that, though they are willing enough to do what they have engaged to do, yet they have lost their ability to perform their word. This is a grave sorrow to a sincere mind. This can never happen to the Almighty God. He faints not, neither is weary. To Him there is no feebleness of decline, nor failure of decay. God All-Sufficient is still His name! His arm is not shortened so that He cannot reach us, neither is His hand palsied that He cannot help us. The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will crack in course of time, but the Lord never fails. The weakness of God is stronger than man. The least of God is greater than the most of man. The Lord cannot possibly withdraw from His Word though inability for, "with God all things are possible." Therefore, go to Him in prayer and take His promise and say, "Lord, be pleased to help Your servant, for I know that You can deliver me and I trust in You as God All-Sufficient!" The Lord will never allow a slur to be cast upon His power, which is one part of His glorious name. He wills to make His power known and it is never according to His mind to leave that power in doubt.

Once more, the Lord's wisdom also holds Him to His promise. Men make engagements thoughtlessly and before long they realize that it would be ruinous to keep them. It is foolish to keep a foolish promise. Yet, because wisdom is not in us, we make mistakes and find ourselves in serious difficulties. It may so happen that a person may feel compelled to say, "I promised to do that which, upon more careful consideration, I find it would be wicked and unjust for me to do. My promise was void from the beginning, for no man has a right to promise to do wrong." Whatever justification an erring man may find in his folly to excuse him from fulfilling his rash promise, nothing of the kind can occur with God! He never speaks without knowledge, for He sees the end from the beginning and He is infallibly good and wise. Therefore, I say unto you, again, what a hold we have upon God because of His Character! We can plead, "Lord, You did not make a mistake when You promised me this blessing! You knew all that would happen; all my sins and all my follies were foreseen by you! You did foreknow all. Therefore be pleased to keep Your Word unto Your servant, even as now I bring it before You and ask You to fulfill it!"

I wish that I had power to make this matter plain so that every Believer who is in need and is about to pray, may see the arguments with which he may approach the Throne of the heavenly Grace.

I should not, however, complete my statement if I did not add that to go to God through Jesus Christ is to use the best and most

powerful of pleas. All the attributes of God are in His Son and, moreover, the Lord Jesus deserves great things at His Father's hands. He permits us to urge His merits and use His name as our authorization–what better leverage can we desire? Is not this an overwhelming argument? The great God will deny nothing to Jesus! For His sake, He will give us all things. When we bring His Son in the arms of our faith and lay Him before the Father, we may have whatever we need. Let us not be slow to use this august plea! Let not our Lord Jesus have to say to us, "Up to now you have asked nothing in My name."

III. So then, last of all, this may be, and this ought to be, OUR PLEA in prayer, as it was Jacob's plea–even this–"You said." We may urge the gracious promise of the Lord as pleading against our own unworthiness. Listen to Jacob's cry, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which You have showed unto Your servant, but You said, 'I will surely do you good.'" Is not that splendid pleading? Down in the dust he prostrates himself and then prays right up! In this fashion let my Hearer cry–"Lord, I am worthy of nothing but wrath and cannot hope to speed with You on the ground of works. But, Lord, You have said, You have said, YOU HAVE SAID!"

This must win the suit. If a man has made me a promise, he cannot refuse to keep it on the ground that I am unworthy because it is his own character that is at stake, not mine! However unworthy

I am, he most not prove himself to be unworthy by failing to keep his word. “If we believe not, yet He abides faithful–He cannot deny Himself.” Everything hinges upon the Character of the Promiser. Do you not see this? When you are burdened with a deep sense of sin; when your heart is ready to break with an overwhelming consciousness of guilt; still know that “God abides faithful, He cannot deny Himself.” When the surges of Divine Wrath beat upon you without a pause, confess your sin and cease not to plead with God. Acknowledge your wickedness and firmly lay hold on the promise and say, “You have said.” Plead such a Word as that in Isaiah, “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Say unto the Lord, “You have said, ‘I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.’”

Entreat the Lord to do as He has said. Under a crushing sense of your own unworthiness, still know that all this does not alter the fact that the Lord has spoken in unchanging mercy and will surely make it good. A God of Truth must keep His promise, however unworthy you may be to whom that promise is made! Is not this most effectual help to a poor soul in drawing near to God in prayer? If you are as evil as seven devils, God will not run back from what He has promised you! If you have waded up to your

throat in sin's foulest infamy, yet if there is a promise made to you and you can plead it, God will stand to His Word! Whatever you may be, God is no liar, no hypocrite, no changeling! He never made a promise to the ear to break it to the experience. He is more willing to keep the promise than we are to have it kept. Come, poor Trembler, in all your sin and defilement, with this upon your tongue–"You said and, therefore, I pray You do as You have said! Your Word says, 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Lord, I confess and I pray You to forgive." O my Brothers and Sisters, such a plea, urged by a breaking heart, must readily prevail with the great Father who waits to be gracious!

This is also good pleading as against our present danger. See how Jacob puts it with regard to his own peril. He says, "Deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me and the mother with the children. And You said, I will surely do you good." In these words he sets out his very natural fear from his brother's anger–the mother, the children, everybody would be murdered by fierce Esau–and to save himself from this threatened horror, Jacob lifts the shield of the promise and as good as says to the Lord his God, "If this calamity should happen, how can Your promise be kept? You said, 'Surely I will do you good' but, Lord, it is not good for Esau's sword to shed our blood! If You permit his anger to slay us,

where is Your engagement to do good unto Your servant?" This reminds one of the plea of Moses, when he asked, "What will the Egyptians say?" If Israel were destroyed in the wilderness, what would Jehovah do for His great name? This is a prevalent argument.

Brethren, what is your present trouble? One sighs out because he knows not where to look for food and raiment. But there is a Word of the Lord for that need–"No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." There is another, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." And another, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." Can you not go to the living God with these words of His upon your tongue and beg Him to be as good as His promise? Say in so many words, "Lord, I am afraid that if I am much longer without employment, I shall not have shoes for my feet, nor bread for my children and I shall be brought to a condition of utter penury–and yet You have said, 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you'! Lord, I plead that promise!" See whether the Lord does not deliver you.

Do you ask me, "Are you sure that God will keep His Word?" I answer, yes. I will be bound for Him at any time and in any place. Many children of God are in sore distress. I do not know how low He may let them go, but I do know that they shall never go lower than that Word–"Underneath are the everlasting arms." I cannot say with David, "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not

seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," for I have seen his seed begging bread and I expect to see it again. If the seed of the righteous misbehave themselves, they shall beg their bread as other people have to do. But I can say, "I have been young and I am now in middle life; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken; no, not so much as once!" The Lord will not turn His back on His friends, nor suffer those who trust in Him to be forsaken.

One cries, "I have been anxiously doing my best." Perhaps you have, dear Brother! Perhaps you have, dear Sister! I am very far from censuring you for doing your best. But sometimes, if you would let God do His best, it would pay you much better! You see Jacob did his best when he divided his company and prepared a present for his brother. But it did not amount to much. It was a very poor little best, was it not? It would have come to nothing if he had not spread the matter before the Lord in prayer. Indeed, when the Lord wrestled with him at Jabbok, that night's prayer, weeping and supplication did the work! Esau was won, after all, not by Jacob's little arrangements, but by the hand of the great Lord laid upon his heart! Jacob's schemes and plans do not figure in the whole narrative except as feeble measures which the Lord rendered superfluous. The cry, "You have said," did all the work!

I beg to bear my witness, as far as my experience goes, that the shortest way out of trouble is pleading with God. Straightforward makes the best runner. You may go round about, and round about,

and round about, and come at nothing–but go straight to God about the business and if He does not end it, then it is not to be ended, but is meant to go on and work out a higher good. In any case, "Cast your burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain you: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Try that promise–it will cover you with armor of light.

Once more, as to future blessedness, Jacob used this argument, "You said, I will surely do you good," as to all his future hopes, for he went on to say, "You said, I will make your seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." Not as much as he should, but still, in a measure, Jacob lived in the future. He lived under the influence and expectation of the Covenant blessing. Now, Brothers and Sisters, what hope have you and I of getting to Heaven? None, except that the Lord has said, "I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish." I shall never perish, for Jesus says I never shall! He has also said, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." Therefore I shall be in Glory with Him and that is enough for me! All our hope of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ and the reward which He will give His saints in the day of His manifestation–all our hopes of the crown of life that fades not away and of the Beatific Vision–all depend on, "You have said." We, according to His promise, look for a new Heaven and a new earth.

Did you ever notice, in the Epistle to the Galatians, how the Apostle Paul makes this dependence upon the promise the distinguishing mark of the chosen seed? He declares that the child of the bond woman was born according to the flesh, but the child of the free woman was born according to the promise. Hagar's seed was according to the flesh, but the true seed, even Isaac, was by promise–and he says, "We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." It is far better to be the child of the promise than to be the child of creature strength, or the child of legal hope–for the child of creature strength and legal hope will have to go packing into the wilderness with a bottle of water and a poor slave mother for his guardian. But the child that hugs the promise, the child that lives upon the promise, the child that waits for everything till he enters his inheritance, he abides always–and all his Father's goods belong to him! Are you in the line of the promise, dear Friend? If so, get into your chamber in your time of trouble and plead for greater mercy than you have ever enjoyed as of yet, because God has promised it to you–and He will do as He has said.

I have done when I have just mentioned, in as brief a way as I can, two or three of the things which God has said and which I want some of you to plead.

Is there one here who needs to find salvation tonight? I invite you to go home, enter your chamber, shut the door, get down your Bible and open on this passage, Isaiah 55:7–"Let the wicked forsake his

ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Now I imagine that I see you in your little room and if you do as I wish you to do, you will read the words carefully and thoughtfully, and then say, "Lord, I am one of these wicked ones! This night I desire to forsake my ways. I will have done with them. This night I desire, unrighteous as I am, to forsake my thoughts and return unto You. Now, You have said, 'I will have mercy upon him: I will abundantly pardon him.' Lord, have mercy upon me and abundantly pardon me, for You have said it!"

When you have thus prayed, expect the Lord to keep the promise. When you look an honest man in the face and say, "You promised it," you expect him to be as good as his promise. Even so, expect that God in Christ Jesus will fulfill His Word. Do not doubt. Believe God and expect the pardon and the blessing.

Next, O tried child of God, I want you to go home and open your Bible at Psalm 1:15. Put it down on a bit of paper, will you? Read, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me." Put your finger on that text and then kneel down and say, "Lord, here I am calling upon You! It is a day of trouble. Deliver me, that I may glorify You." Believe that God means His promise and is not trifling with you. On the other hand, do not trifle with His Word, but make business of it and wait upon the Lord to

have His promise made good! Some big-mouthed folk will promise anything, but they perform nothing. God is not after their order–I pray you, do not treat Him as if He were! He will hear the cry of the humble and He will remember for them His Covenant.

Is there a poor soul here seeking salvation who cannot get at either of these promises? Then go home and look up John 3:18–"He that believes on Him is not condemned." Go and plead that, and say, "I believe on Jesus Christ and, therefore, I am not condemned. Lord, give me to feel the peace which comes of Your justifying Grace!"

If that Scripture does not suit you, there is one more upon which I, myself, lived for months in the days of my selfdespair. It is found in Romans 10:13–"Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." I remember getting hold of that passage and feeling that it was a door of hope to my soul! Let me quote it in full. "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him: for whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." My heart said, "I call upon His name. I trust in Him. I pray to Him. If I perish, I will perish crying to Him and calling upon Him!" And on that promise I lived until I found the Lord! I pray that some of you may go home and plead in the same manner, "Lord, I call upon You; therefore fulfill Your Word and let salvation come unto my house!"

Do you believe that God speaks the truth? If you do, you have living faith within you! Can you trust God to keep His promise? If you can, the work of Divine Grace has already begun in your soul! You are no dead sinner any longer. You are not under condemnation. “He that believes on Him has everlasting life.” You have a measure of that everlasting life within you at this moment because you have a measure of faith in God! Oh, for power, now, to turn that faith to practical use by an earnest, pleading prayer! “Lord, do as You have said!” Such a prayer will soon bring peace and rest to your soul.

God bless you, dear Friends! I feel much pleasure in addressing you at this time. If I have exceeded the time, you may well excuse it, for I am not always well enough to address you. Oh, how I have wearied to be in my pulpit! I would ask nothing more of God than to give me bread and water and permit me to occupy this pulpit on every occasion when I ought to be here! But I cannot, as yet, get that privilege at His hands, for it is not a matter of promise. If He had said I should always be in good health, I am sure Satan, himself, could not make me ill! Having, therefore, no specific promise, I am satisfied to accept the general assurance that all things work together for good to them that love God. From this assurance I know that I shall have such good health or ill-health as shall be good for me! What more can I desire than that the Lord’s

will should be done in my mortal body, whether by weakness or by strength?

This, however, I will do–by God's help I will preach as earnestly as I can when I do preach–and I will speak as plainly, as pointedly and as earnestly as possible when I am allowed to open my mouth in His name. Oh, that God might give me every soul in this place at this hour! And He will do it if we go to Him in humble prayer, pleading what He has said! The Lord is able to bless the word which we preach to an incalculable extent. There is no limit to the good which He can work by this one sermon! Oh, my dear Hearer, your hope does not lie in what you can say, but in what the Lord has said! Think little of the word of man, but think everything of the Word of God! Believe it for yourself and see if it is not fulfilled. Cling to the promise, come what may! The promise will hold you as surely as you hold the promise! God will be true to His promise and true to you, for Jesus Christ's sake–be you true to Him. Amen. PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON–Genesis 28:10-22; and Genesis 32:1-12.HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"–192, 981, 687.

This sermon commences the 33 rd volume of our sermons. It is a fit moment for grateful praise for their long continuance and for asking readers who have profited by them to spread them far and wide. What the Lord has blessed to some, He will bless to many more. The Preacher is recovering from severe illness and sends his

loving salutations to all his readers, desiring for them, “A Happy New Year.” He hopes to be in his pulpit, again, as soon as he has recovered strength. Oh, that he might gain spiritual as well as physical vigor! Will not his readers pray for this? If sought, why should it not be received? The present sermon leads the Preacher to beg importunately for the daily prayers of his friends.

Ge 32:28 • Power With God

SERMON 2978

Power With God

"As a prince have you power with God."

Genesis 32:28

MEN think a great deal of anyone who has power with royalty. If it were said, concerning somebody in this place, "That individual has very great power with the Queen," there are a great many of you who would turn at once to look at that person. He who has great power with an earthly prince is sure to have many flatterers around him who will pay him homage for the sake of the advantage which they hope to gain through his mediation. But, dear Friends, what a far greater honor it is to have power with the King of kings! Power with men may be an evil thing, but what blessing must come

from power with God! How it ennobles the soul of the man who possesses it! This man, Jacob, who has power with God, is called Israel, a prince, for so he is–but princes have no such dignity as his unless they, too, have power with God, for he is "a prince of God."

What a comprehensive blessing it must be to have power with God, for he who has power with God must have power with men! Creatures must submit where the Creator, Himself, has yielded. If you can have your way with the Master, you may depend upon it that you can have your way with His servants. The man who has power with God must be safe. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" No weapon that is formed against such a man can prosper and every tongue that rises against him in judgment, he can condemn, for, having power with God, he shall be able to plant his foot upon the neck of his adversaries and to reign over those who rebel against him. Such a man as that cannot be in need. If he has power with God, he will tell Him about his needs and they shall all be supplied. He will confess his sins and they will be forgiven. God will deal well with the man who has power with Him. There is such a wide range of blessing here that I must not stop to enlarge upon it. If you have power with God, you will see that this is a weapon which, like the flaming sword at the gate of the Garden of Eden, turns every way. Or I may say of it what David said of the sword of Goliath, "There is none like that; give it to me." Human language can never tell a thousandth part of the value of power with God!

I want you to note, first, WHAT THIS POWER CANNOT BE. “Power with God.”

You scarcely need to be told that it cannot be anything like physical force in opposition to GodwithGod, not power against God, that is mentioned in our text. No creature, however mighty, can have any power to standin opposition to Omnipotence. Who are we that we should ever stand up to oppose the Most High? Let the twig contend with the fierce flame, or the wax with the burning heat, but let us not contend with God! If we did so, we should be like the moth in the candle–utterly consumed. The strongest and the proudest men must be but as stubble in the day of God’s anger. In fact, to think of man having any power against God is sheer madness, for we have not any power at all apart from God. We only exist because He wills it. The breath in our nostrils is His gift, moment by moment. We should go back to the nothingness from which we sprang if He withdrew, for a single instant, His sustaining hand! Man has no power against God. O you foolish sinners who are resisting Him, give up the unequal battle! I charge you, before God, to count the cost of a contest with your Maker before you begin it! As well might a potsherd strive with him who molds it as for you, a creature, to strive with your Creator! He will break you in pieces, like a potter’s vessels, in the day of His anger. Therefore, be wise and end the fight–and be at peace with Him!

Neither can this “power with God” mean mental power. There are persons who seem to exalt their intellect evenabove God Himself! It is a fine thing to be gifted with powers of argument and to have a keen reasoning faculty. But, at the same time, to some people these are very dangerous possessions. I know certain individuals who say that they will never believe what they cannot understand. If they adhere to that determination, they will never believe in their own existence, for they certainly cannot understand that! They seek to overthrow the Word of God and the Doctrines of the Gospel with their subtle wit and profound thought, but it is sheer madness for human folly to contend with Divine Wisdom! It is insanity carried to the very highest point for even the wisest of men to think that their intellects are a match for the Omniscience of God, for, “the foolishness of God is wiser than men.” Even the simplicity of the Gospel–and it is very simple–and “the foolishness of preaching”–which, in some people’s esteem, is utter foolishness, shall win the victory while those who imagine that they are wise shall be proved to be fools! Brothers and Sisters, let us never attempt to argue any case in opposition to God’s will, for we cannot have any power with Him in that way. Let us always surrender our judgment to the teaching of His Word and conform our will to His will. If we ever think that a certain course is best, but it is evident, by the working of God’s Providence, that He does not think so, let us not for a single moment hold a debate with Him, but let us say, as David did,

“I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because You did it.” If God does anything, that is enough for us! If God says anything, that is enough for us! Instead of arguing andreasoning, “It is written,” or “God has said it,” is sufficient to settle any question that concerns a Christian!

It is almost necessary, in these days of superstition, to say that neither can any man have any magical power withGod, for, albeit that people nowadays would be ashamed to confess that they believed in magical arts, yet something very akin to it seems still to exist among mankind. They suppose that there is some efficacy in the mere repetition of certain words. I am sure they must think so, for they do not put their hearts into the words, but they are quite content if they have galloped through a collect, or some set form of prayer. Another supposition is that the prayer is all the better for being offered by a certain individual who is ordained to that particular work, so those who are sick send for an official to come and “pray for them”–I have often heard that expression, as though it was thought that this person, by reading a prayer out of a book, could, by a sort of magic, do the sick one good! O Sirs, mere words strung together–whether they are in Hebrew, or Greek, or Latin, or English–are of no use before God! It is the utterance of the heart that He hears,and you must never imagine that there is any excellence in a certain arrangement of letters and sounds, or that certain men, by the use of these words, can bring down blessings

from above! Oh, no! Jacob had no abracadabra, no talisman, no magic, no charm, no enchantment–and God forbid that you and I should ever be such heathens as to believe that there is any power with God in any such things! God is not prevailed upon to grant His blessings by any such fooleries as these–He utterly abhors them!

And, again, when we speak of having power with God, we must not suppose that any man can have any meritoriouspower with God. It has been thought by some people that a man can attain to a certain degree of merit, and then he will receive Heaven's blessings–if he offers a certain number of prayers, if he does this, or feels that, or suffers the other, then he will stand in high favor with God. Many are living under this delusion and, in their way, are trying to get power with God by what they are, or do, or suffer! They think they would get power with God if they were to feel sin more, or if they were to weep more, or if they were to repent more. It is always something that they are to do, or something they are toproduce in themselves which they are to bring before God so that, when He sees it, He will say, "Now I will have mercy upon you, and grant you the blessing you crave." O dear Friends, all this is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! There is far more power with God in the humble acknowledgment of sinfulness than in a boastful claim of cleanliness–much more power in pleading that Grace will forgive than in asking that Justice should

reward–when we plead our emptiness and sin, we plead the truth–but when we talk about our goodness and meritorious doings, we plead a lie! And lies can never have any power in the Presence of the God of Truth. O Brothers and Sisters, let us forever shake off from us, as we would shake a viper from our hand, all ideas that by any goodness of ours, which even the Spirit of God might work in us, we should be able to deserve anything at God's hands and to claim as right anything from the Justice of our Maker!

II. Now, secondly, let us inquire FROM WHERE THIS POWER PROCEEDS. If anyone asks, "How can a man have power with God?" The answer is, "Not because the power is in him, but he can have power with God by reason ofsomething that is in God."

First, God's people get power with Him from the very Character of God's Nature. You will soon see what I mean. Have you ever visited a family in the depths of poverty and found them with a few rags to sleep upon, with nothing whatever in the cupboard, with a child dying for lack of food, mother and father with pinched countenances who tell you that, for the last 48 hours they have had nothing whatever to eat? And have you not felt that they have had power over you, so that you could not help them? I am certain that it has been so, if you have a tender heart, and are of a gracious, generous spirit. The power that they have over you does not arise from their riches, but quite the reverse–from their poverty. Their power over you does not lie in their being respectable and well-to-

do–quite the opposite–their power over you lies in their being in abject distress. Their misery has power to excite your pity! Because you see them in such a sad state, you, being a man of compassionate spirit, are straightway moved to try to help them. There is many a spectacle of suffering and sorrow in this world that even a strong man cannot bear to look at, especially if he is unable to relieve those who are in distress. Now, if we, being evil, are so stirred by the sight of human misery, how much more is our heavenly Father, who is all goodness, tenderness, gentleness and love, moved to pity by the miseries of His children? Whenever you and I come to Him, it is wise for us to plead before Him our weakness, that He may pity it and make us strong–our poverty, that He may pity it, and enrich us–our dire necessity, that He may pity it and supply all our needs–our low estate, our sinking heart, our trembling spirit, our utter nothingness! In that way we shall have power with Him.

If you have been accustomed to visit the poor, you know how those who have got to be "old stagers" at receiving charity, never put their best leg forward when they want to impress you with a due sense of their need. If they had a little of anything in the house, they would take care that you did not see it. If there has been any improvement in their circumstances since you last called upon them, you will have to fish a long while before you will find it out–but they are very adept at bringing forward the black side of their

case because their power lies there with those who have generous hearts! And so, Brothers and Sisters, our power with God, when we come to Him as sinners, lies not in what we are, butin what God is! He is Love, He is full of pity, He is Tenderness, He is Gentleness. He wills not the death of a sinner, butdelights to display His saving Mercy, to manifest the abundance of His Grace. The foundation of our power with God must always lie in the love and tenderness of God. He is susceptible of pity–yes, He is Tenderness itself. He is a God of Compassion and, therefore, it is that the poor, feeble sons of Adam have power with Him!

But we get a further view of the source from where this power with God proceeds when we reach the next point, namely, God's promises. God has, in His Word, been pleased to say that He will do this and that and give this and that.He was quite free, once, to do whatever He pleased, but now that God has given us His promises, He is not free to break them and it would be inconsistent with His glorious attributes that He should do so. Neither will He ever be false to a single syllable that has gone forth out of His mouth. When God gave His promises, He did, as it were, put Himself in the power of those who know how to plead the promises. Every promise is so much strength given to the man who has faith in the promise, for he may, with it, overcome even the Omnipotent God Himself! Why, Brothers and Sisters, if your character is what it should be, and a person comes to you and says, "You promised to

give me such-and-such a thing," has not the person who can say that, power over you to the full extent of your promise? If you are a true man, he has beaten you at once! If you say to him, "But when did I give you that promise? You may have misunderstood what I said," and he puts his hand in his pocket and brings out your promise in black and white, with your name signed to it, there is no getting away from that, is there? Now, that is just the way in which God gives us power with Him, for He has given us His promises in black and white! Here they are in the Book which we know to be His Book, His own Infallible Word! It is a blessed thing to be able to come before God on your knees and to put your finger on a promise in the Bible, and to say, "Lord, this is what You have promised that You will do. I beseech You to do it because You are the God of Truth. I know that You cannot lie, so I remind You of Your promise and plead with You to do as You have said." Do you not see what power you have with God when He has given you faith to lay hold upon Him, bringing His own gracious promise in your hand? There is a conquering power in faith, because faith pleads the promises of God!

Thus, you see, there are two sources of power–God's Nature and God's promises.

But the true child of God knows of other sources of power with God, so next, he pleads the relationships of Grace.God, in His infinite mercy, has been pleased to choose certain people to be His

children. “You shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” There was no reason, in themselves, why they should be His sons and daughters, but His Sovereign Grace adopted them and His Spirit regenerated them. But the moment that God made any one of us His child, He did again–I speak with all reverence–give us power with Him and put Himself into our hands! Who among us does not know the power of a child over his father? There are some children who have too much power. There is a Greek story of the little boy who ruled all Athens because he ruled his mother and his mother ruled his father–and his father ruled the senate and the senate ruled Athens! And so, in that way, the little boy practically ruled the whole city! And I am afraid that there are some children who have a good deal too much power in that way. But our Heavenly Father, though He is too wise to indulge us in that way, is so good that He will not deny us any privilege that, by right, belongs to the position of a child. When your child appeals to you because there is something that he really needs, but which you have withheld from him, and he says, at last, “But, my dear father, will you not grant me this?” Or if you have chastened him and he says, “Father, stay your hand! Am I not your child?” you cannot resist his appeal. He has power with you–you know that he has! And what a wonderful power we have when we can truly say, “Abba! Father!” We shall have power with God in our times of greatest weakness if we can cry, “Abba! Father!”

I can never forget a certain illness when I had been racked with pain and brought very low with heaviness of spirit through the nature of the complaint from which I was suffering. I felt driven almost to despair, one night, until I laid hold of God, in an agony of prayer, and pleaded with Him something like this, “If my child were in such anguish as I am in, I would listen to him and relieve him if I could. You are my Father, and I am Your child, then will You not treat me like a child?” Almost at the very moment when I presented that plea before God, my pain ceased and I fell into a sweet slumber, from which I woke up with, “Abba! Father!” on my lips and in my heart! I believe that this is an invincible plea, because, when God calls Himself our Father, He means it. There are some fathers in this world, who do not act at all as fathers should–shame upon them! But that will never be said of our Heavenly Father. He is a true Father and He has a heart of compassion towards His children. And He does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men–and when we know how to appeal to His Fatherhood, we shall prevail with Him!

Once more, dear Friends, the power that we have with God also springs from His past actions. Look at what He hasdone for His own people. First, He chose them. Well, then, as He chose them, He cannot cast them away because He is an Immutable God! As He has made His choice, He stands to it. Paul asks, “Has God cast away His people?” And he answers his own question, “God has not

cast away His people which He foreknew." That is what He has never done! Then, in addition to choosing us, He has also redeemed us. And after He has redeemed us from destruction by the blood of His Son, can He allow us to be lost? Can He pay for us with such a price as that and yet neglect to keep us to the end? That cannot be! When He gave His Son as a Ransom for us, He did, indeed, put Himself into our hands, for, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Do but know that God gave His Son for you, dear Friend–know that Jesus Christ is yours and the logic of your prayer is clear enough, and forcible enough, when you say, "What can You deny me, O my Father? You have given me Your Son, so, by His blood and wounds, by His life and death, and resurrection Glory, give my spirit the Grace it needs, since You have given me Jesus Christ."

Do you not see, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that every mercy which God has bestowed upon you gives you power over Him? "Therefore, sing with John Newton–

"His love in time past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink!
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through."

If He has done so much for us, will He not do still more? Does not every blessing which is bestowed by God come to us with this

message in its mouth, “There is more to follow,” and may we not be quite sure that He who has blessed us now for 40 years, for fifty, sixty, seventy–and I see some who have numbered 80 years, and you have had God’s blessing all the while–then, has He not, by all these years of favor and mercy, pledged and bound Himself to bless you even to the end? Assuredly it is so!

III. Now, in the third place, notice HOW THIS POWER WITH GOD CAN BE EXERCISED BY CHRISTIANS. What shape does power with God take? Of course it takes the shape of prayer. Christians put forth the power they have with God when they draw near to Him to ask for blessings upon themselves and upon others, but it is not every man who prays who has power with God, or who knows how to use the power which really exists. Who are the people who really have power with God! I will tell you.

First, this power is exercised by those who are deeply sensible of their own weakness. No man has power with Godwho thinks he is strong, except in the sense in which Paul wrote, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” I have an idea, and I think that Scripture supported it, that Jacob wrestled very hard with the Angel, but that he never won the victory till the Angel touched the hollow of his thigh and caused the sinew to shrink. Then, when Jacob could not any longer stand–as he fell, he clutched the Angel with all his might as though he would also pull Him down if he must himself go down–and the weight of Jacob was all the greater because he

could not stand. His very weakness was an element of his strength and that moment of weakness was the moment of his victory! Now, if you go to God feeling that you are partly full, He will not fill you, but will wait till you are quite empty before He will pour His blessing into you. He will not mix oil with water and, until He has emptied all the water out of the vessel, He will not begin to pour in His oil or His wine. When you feel that you have a little strength for prayer, I think it is very likely that you will not have power with God. But when it comes to this, that you cry out, "O God, I can do nothing–all my power is turned to utter weakness! I am driven to the lowest extremity," then, in the very desperation of your weakness, you will clutch the promise-making God and, as it were, drag down the angel and win the blessing, as Jacob did. It is your weakness that will do it, not your strength!

Have you ever tried to go to God as a fully-sanctified man? I did so once. I had heard some of the "perfect" brethren, who are travelling to Heaven by the "high level" railway and I thought I would try their plan of praying. I went before the Lord as a consecrated and sanctified man. I knocked at the gate. I had been accustomed to gain admittance the first time I knocked, but this time I did not. I knocked again and kept on knocking, though I did not feel quite easy in my conscience about what I was doing. At last I clamored loudly to be let in and when they asked me who I was, I replied that I was a perfectly-consecrated and fully sanctified

man–but they said that they did not know me! The fact was, they had never seen me in that character before. At last, when I felt that I must get in, and must have a hearing, I knocked again and when the keeper of the gate asked, "Who is there?" I answered, "I am Charles Spurgeon, a poor sinner who has no sanctification or perfection of his own to talk about, but who is trusting alone to Jesus Christ, the sinners' Savior." The gatekeeper said, "Oh, it is you, is it? Come in! We know you well enough, we have known you these many years!" And then I went in directly. I believe that is the best way of praying, and the way to win the day. It is when you have got on your fine feathers and top-knots that the Lord will not know you! When you have taken them all off and gone to Him as you went at the first, then you can say to Him–

"Once a sinner near despair
Sought your Mercy Seat by prayer.
Mercy heard and set him free,
Lord, that mercy came to me"–

"and I am that poor publican who dared not lift so much as his eyes towards Heaven, but smote upon his breast and cried, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner,' and he went home to his house justified rather than the Brother over there who talked so proudly about the higher life, but who went home without a blessing." Yes, my Brother, you are strong when you are weak, and you are perfect when you know that you are imperfect! And you are nearest to

Heaven when you think you are farthest off. The less you esteem yourself, the higher is God's esteem of you.

Again, in order to have power with God, we must have simple faith. Nobody who doubts can prevail with God. Thepromise is not to the waverer, for James says, "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord," The man who gets the blessing is the one who fully believes in God's promise and who so believes in it that he acts upon it. I shall never forget the faith of a certain member of this Church, who is still living. About 18 or 19 years ago, I was very ill, indeed. Most people thought that I would die, but, one morning, very early, this good Brother came down to my house and asked to see my wife. It was just about daybreak and when she saw him, he said to her, "I have been all the night wrestling with God for your husband's life. We cannot afford to lose our Pastor and I feel sure that he is going to live, so I thought I would just walk here and tell you so," "Thank you, thank you," said my wife, "I am very grateful for your prayers and for your faith." It is not everybody who can pray to God like that! And we fail to obtain the blessings that we seek because we do not pray like that. But, dear Brothers and Sisters, if we were to believe God just as we believe our friends–if we were to give God as much trust as we give to our husbands and our wives–how strong in faith we would be! He deserves a thousand times more confidence than we can ever repose in the very best of our relatives or friends and if we

have faith in His promises, we shall certainly overcome Him! If you trust Him, He cannot fail you. It is possible for even a good man to fail one who trusts him, but it is quite impossible for God to fail the soul that has relied upon Him!

I am sure that if we ministers only believe God more and preach more in faith, He will honor us more. I fancy that if God were to give us Pentecostal blessings, it would be seen that many of us are by no means ready to receive them. Suppose there were 5,000 persons converted in one day here, most of the churches round here would say, "There is a shocking state of excitement aver at the Tabernacle. It is really dreadful!" The very "sound" Brethren would feel that we had gone off into Arminianism, or some other error and I expect that some of you would say, very dolefully, "Oh, dear! Dear! Dear! Dear! We do hope they will all stand." The first thought that would be excited in many Christian minds would be one of suspicion! I am sure that if we reported that anywhere in England, 3,000 were brought to know the Lord in one day, there is not one Christian in ten who would believe that such a thing was possible! And there is not one in a hundred who would think that it was true! And we ministers would be very much of the same mind. I was preaching in Bedford, and I prayed that God would bless the sermon and give me at least some few souls that afternoon. When I had done, there was an old Wesleyan Brother there who gave me a good scolding, which I richly deserved. He said to me, "I did not

say, ‘Amen,’ when you were asking for a few souls to be converted, for I thought you were limiting the Holy One of Israel! Why did you not pray with all your heart for all of them to be saved. I did,” he added, “and that was why I didnot say, ‘Amen,’ to your narrow prayer.” It is often the case that we preachers do not honor God by believing that He will give great blessings and, therefore, He does not honor us by giving those great blessings! But if we maintained a closer adherence to the Truth of God and had a firmer confidence that God’s Word shall never return unto Him void, He would do far greater things by us than He has ever yet done!

To this sense of our own weakness and our full belief in God, we must add earnest attention to His Word. Brother,you cannot expect God to listen to you if you will not listen to Him. And when you ask of God, you must not imagine that He will give to you what you ask of Him if you do not give to Him what he asks of you. If a man loves to sin, his prayers cannot register with the God of Holiness. When God says to a man, “Such-and-such a thing is to be done,” and the man says, “I will not do it,” the next time he goes to God in prayer, it is very likely that the Lord will say to Him, “As you did not do as I wished, I shall not do as you wish.” The toleration of any known sin deprives us of power with God–and the neglect of any known duty prevents a man from succeeding when he is on his knees. If you would prevail with God, you must have “a conscience void of offense.” You must go before the Lord

confessing your sins and saying, “O Lord, help me to do Your will in all things! I am perfectly willing to do so and I wish to be Your loyal, obedient servant in all things.” If you do that, you will find that whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.

In addition to all that I have said, the man who is to prevail with God must be a man who is terribly in earnest. Whatan earnest man Jacob was in that night of wrestling! What a grand utterance that was, “I will not let You go, except You bless me”! Cold prayers do, as it were, ask God not to listen to them. When you pray for anything, if you do not presentyour petition with earnestness and fervor, you cannot expect the Lord to hear you. Some people, when they pray, are like the little boys in the street who give runaway knocks at the door–and off they go! But the man who prays rightly gets a hold of the knocker on the Door of Mercy and he knocks, and knocks, and if there is no answer, he knocks again and again, and if there is not, then, an answer, he knocks again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and the longer he is kept waiting, the more loudly he knocks till, at last, you would think that he was going to carry the house by storm and make the doorposts jump out of their sockets, he knocks so hard! That is the kind of man who wins the day with God–the man who will not let the Lord go until He blesses him! The prayers of John Knox brought down upon Scotland such copious blessings because they were the prayers of a man whose heart was all on fire with sacred earnestness, and who

prayed with his whole soul and spirit. Our Lord Jesus, Himself, said, “The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.”

To all these qualifications for power with God we must add holy importunity. Wrestling is not merely laying hold ofa man and then letting him go. I wonder how Jacob did hold that Man who wrestled with him until the breaking of the day? I guarantee you that he had a tight grip on Him and I expect that, sometimes, it was especially leg-work, and then arm-work, and then loin-work, for, when men wrestle in real earnest, all their sinews, muscles, bones and limbs are brought into play. So it must have been with Jacob that night, and he kept on holding the Angel fast, and saying in his soul, if not with his lips–

“With You all night I mean to stay,

And wrestle till the break of day”–

and, therefore, the blessing was given to him because he kept on struggling for it! There are some mercies which never will be bestowed except in answer to continued, importunate prayer. O Brother or Sister, if you know how to keep on pleading, you are the one who has power with God! You will be called Israel if you can spend the whole night in resolute, determined, humble, believing importunity! The blessing must come if you feel that you cannot do without it, because it is for God’s Glory that it should be bestowed upon you!

And, dear Friends, there is great power with God when, in importunate prayer, we at last come to tearful entreaty.In Hosea 12: 4, the Prophet tells us that Jacob “had power over the Angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto Him.” Moses does not tell us that in the Book of Genesis, but Hosea also had the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and he gives us this interesting item concerning Jacob’s wrestling, that, “he wept.” I think I see the Patriarch covered with sweat through his great exertions in wrestling, but, in addition, his heart is breaking within him and he is sighing and crying all the while–and the hot tears are falling on the Angel’s hands and I think it was the tears that finally won the victory. You remember that when our Lord Jesus Christ was in the Garden of Gethsemane, “He 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.” And the man who knows how to weep, if not actually, yet with real spiritual tears–theman whose soul gets stirred up to a passionate agony of desire–is the man who has power with God! If we have any such members in this Church–and I believe that we have many who really do weep over the souls of sinners–they are the men and women who will bring down the blessing in answer to their prayers and tears! Brothers and Sisters, if you are in the habit of weeping over your unconverted children and, in your pleading with God for their salvation, are in the habit of weeping unless the blessing comes,

you are sure to get the blessing sooner or later! You are the very strength of the Church! You are the lifeguards of the Church and God will be sure to give innumerable blessings in answer to those prayers and tears of yours! May we have many such Church members, for these are people who have power with God!

IV. I close by briefly noticing TO WHAT USE THIS POWER MAY BE TURNED.

Whenever this power with God is given , it will bring down many blessings upon the person who has it and it willalso make him the means of great blessing to others. My time has almost gone, so I will only dwell on that second point.

Abraham was a man who had power with God, but there was poor Lot living over in Sodom, just as a great many professed Christians are doing today. I hope they are God's people, but I cannot make them out. They like worldly amusements and they like worldly talk–they are like Lot in Sodom. I wonder how they can endure the foul atmosphere in which they live? I have often said that the Grace of God can live where I could not. There are some people with whom I should not like to live, yet I trust the Grace of God is in them. At least, I hope so, I must not judge them. But, dear Brethren, if ever that part of the Church which is like Lot in Sodom gets a blessing, it must be through you who are like Abraham and have power with God! Pray for your poor inconsistent Brothers and Sisters–entreat the Lord to prevent them from going any further

into sin. Ask the Lord that they may not be destroyed with Sodom in the day of His vengeance, and the Lord will hear you, and bring Lot safely out of Sodom, though it may be that Lot will have to lose all that he has and lose his wife, too, before he will get out. You will get him out if you know how to pray for him.

Moses was another man who had power with God. You remember that when the Israelites made the golden calf, the Lord said to Moses, "Let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of you a great nation." Was not that a wonderful opportunity for Moses? He was to be made into a great nation, and all the rest of the people were to be destroyed. But you recollect how Moses pleaded with the Lord and he did not plead is vain. The Lord said to him, "Let Me alone, that I may consume them," but it seems as though Moses stood up and grasped God's hand, in which He held His rod of vengeance, and at last the Lord said that He would pardon the nation and spare them in answer to the plea of Moses, the man who had power with God.

And there was Aaron, too, when the plague broke out among the people who had murmured against him and Moses, and thousands were being struck dead. At the command of Moses, he took a censer and filled it with burning coals and incense–and ran into the midst of the congregation just where the death wave had come–"and he stood between the dead and the living; and the

plague was stayed." Aaron, the high priest with his censer, had power with God. The Lord Jesus Christ, Aaron's great Antitype, is continually exercising this power on the behalf of His people, and He also helps some of His servants to do the same work–Martin Luther, to wit. How he seemed to stand with the censer of the Gospel between the living and the dead and, in other dark times and perilous ages, God has raised up many eminent servants to whom He has given that same censer of the Gospel which pours forth a sweet savor of Christ as they also swing it to and fro, standing between the living and the dead! Oh, that God would give power to many of you, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, in some such way as this! Recollect the power that the early Christians had with God to get Peter out of prison. If you have power with God, it is an engine which you may burn in all manner of ways for the blessing of your fellow Christians and of poor outcast sinners. Therefore I charge you to seek it! And when you get it, hold it fast and walk humbly before God that He may not take this power from you, but may you be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, for Jesus' sake! Amen. –Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Ge 32:29 • He Blessed Him There

SERMON 3219

"He Blessed Him There"

"He blessed him there."

Genesis 32:29

JACOB had said to the Angel, "Tell me, I pray You, Your name." In answer to that enquiry, he was gently rebuked. The Angel did not come to ratify Jacob's curiosity, but He came as a messenger from God with a blessing–"and He blessed him there." There are a great many things we would like to know when we read the Bible. But if we read it so as to find salvation, that will be much better than having our curiosity gratified. When we come to hear a sermon, too, we should like, perhaps, to meet with some fine passages, or to have some telling anecdotes that we could carry away with us. But

if, instead, the Lord's messenger shall give us a blessing from God, Himself, it will be infinitely better! The disciples, after the Resurrection, wanted to know from the Savior something about the times and seasons, but He did not tell it to them. He said to them, "You shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you." That was far better, far more valuable to them–and though for the time it might not please them so much, yet, for all practical purposes, it enriched them far more! Angels' names we can afford to leave, but God's blessing we must have and we cannot do without it!

Let us just think, for a minute or two, WHAT THIS BLESSING WAS WHICH JACOB GAINED AS THE RESULT OF A NIGHT OF PRAYER.

I wonder whether anybody here has ever spent a night in prayer. Is there a man among us who has ever wrestled with the Angel for so long? Alas, I am afraid to put the question and ask for an answer lest I should only gain one through your silence! Brothers and Sisters, it is not easy to continue for a whole night in prayer. It has been well observed that it is easier to hear a sermon two hours long than to pray for an hour. The more spiritual the exercise, the sooner we tire. Joshua was not weary of fighting in the valley, but Moses' hands began to grow weary with holding them up in prayer. Yet surely there have been times in our lives, as in that of Jacob's, when a night of prayer would have been becoming. Surely we have

been in as great straits and struggles as he was and have needed the benediction of Heaven as did that much-tried Patriarch. Perhaps it would be well, before long, to try to accomplish this feat and wait, from sunset to sunrise with God. The old knights, before they took a higher degree of knighthood, spent a night in some church and were supposed to be in prayer. He that shall really spend a night in prayer shall win celestial blessings. He shall lie down a Jacob, but he shall rise up a prince! There is a distinct advance from Jacob to Israel, from being a supplanter to being a prince! Prayer gives an incalculable blessing and this is the advance Jacob gained–an incomparable advance in spiritual things.

But besides that, he gained as the blessing attending that night's prayer, deliverance out of great peril. He thoughtthat he and his would have been slain by Esau, but the Angel blessed him and not a single lamb of all his flock was hurt, neither were the women and children put to the slightest fear! Prayer brought down Heaven's shield to cover Jacob in the hour of danger!

Again, he got what was still better under some aspects, reconciliation with his brother. He had done his brothergrievous wrong, but his brother forgave him. I do not know, but I think a Christian would almost sooner be exposed to peril than live under a sense of having committed an injustice. It is a great relief to your mind, when you have done so, to find it all set right again. To think,

“I did that man a wrong, but it is gone and forgiven forever,” is a blessing worth praying all night to obtain!

Happy was Jacob, also, to have the breach healed between himself and his brother. To meet him, fall upon his neckand kiss him–to feel that being so near akin they should no longer be divided in heart. Are you divided from your brother? Has any root of bitterness sprung up to trouble you? Have the friendships of life been curdled by dislike? It were well to have a night of prayer to get them back again–and again to serve side by side with your fellows. I take it to be a vast blessing to a Christian to be delivered from the temptation to retaliate, to be saved from all hardness of heart and bitterness of spirit. The Angel, when He gave Jacob that, blessed him, indeed!

Besides all these blessings–in addition to having risen in rank before God, to having had his wrong amended, to having been forgiven by his brother, to being restored to friendship–I do not doubt that from that night a blessing rested upon Jacob’s heart and the dews of that night fed his soul for years to come! He was anointed with fresh oil from that moment! And as he rose, limping upon his thigh, he was not merely a better man by title, but better by nature! He had been away in a far-off country with Laban and much of the dew of his spirit had gone from him. But now that he had got back again into Canaan, the Angel sealed his return by giving him the blessings of the return!

Such were the blessings of Jacob and I should not wonder if there is someone here who has said, “I know in a measure, personally, what those blessings are and wish I enjoyed them to the fullest.” My prayer, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, is that even tonight God may bless you! According to your necessity, may He shape the blessing, but oh, may He bless you, indeed, and bless you here!

II. Now, secondly, let us enquire, WHAT WAS THE PLACE WHERE JACOB GOT THIS CHOICE BLESSING?

And the answer comes, first, it was a place of very peculiar trial. He had just got out of Laban’s clutches to fall in the way of Esau. He had fled from a lion and now a bear met him–and he feared that his wives and children would be utterly destroyed by his revengeful brother. It was a fearful trial and the mere fear of it must have left scars on his heart. Yet, “He blessed him there.” Is not this a very usual circumstance with the people of God, that their severest trials are the times of their choicest mercies? I remind you how often this has been the case, and how true Cowper’s words have been–

“The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.”

Believe that, for the present trial in which you are, perhaps, now entering, it shall be written, “He blessed him there where He tried him.” He will bless you there, where He is trying you–in the waters, in the furnace when you are being refined again and again,

and the hot coals are being heaped upon you–He will bless you there! The disciples feared, we are told, as they entered into the cloud, but it was there that they saw the Savior transfigured. And often we fear the cloud into which we enter when we are only passing into the secret place of the Most High, where, under the shadow of the Almighty, we shall have yet more delightful visions of Himself!

If we were wise, we would begin to welcome trials. We would rather fear to be without them for, up till now, what do we not owe to the furnace, to the rod, to the threshing-flail? Scarcely has a mercy of any great spiritual value come to us at all except by the way of the cross! I am sure I may look upon every choice blessing I have enjoyed as having come to me in rumbling wagons like the good things which came from Egypt to old father Jacob. We have been blessed in places of trial–let us not, therefore, dread to go to such places again, but go on our way towards Heaven feeling that whatever difficulty we meet with shall only be another of the spots in which God shall bless us. “He blessed him there.”

It was also a place of pleading. That is most noteworthy. “He blessed him there,” where he had spent a night in prayer. Where he had a wrestling match with an unknown Stranger. There where he would not let the Angel go. There where he held Him fast until he gained the benediction. “He blessed him there.” If you are short of blessings, resort to the place of mighty prayer–

“Beyond your utmost needs
His love and power can bless!
To praying souls He always grants
More than they can express.”

All things are open to the man who knows how to pray importunately. “The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.” Mark you, Jacob’s wrestling was no child’s play. I have seen painters attempt to depict it and only now and then have they caught the true idea. But one of them represents Jacob as trying most lustily to give his antagonist a back fall and, no doubt, he did tax his strength to the utmost until, in the dead of night, he was faint–faint with the toil he had gone through.

Begging of God must be real work. It is said of begging that it is the worst trade in the world, but a man who is to make anything of prayer must throw his whole soul into it. Your prayers that have hardly life enough in them to live, your words that hang like icicles beneath your tongues, that are scarcely heard even by yourselves, how do you think that they will be heard by God? If there is not enough prayer in us to stir our own hearts, how can we expect that God should be moved by our entreaties? It was not so with Jacob–“He blessed him there.” There he prevailed, and if you want a blessing, you must get it in that way. When you get to the state that you will take no denial–that you would sooner die than not be blessed–you shall get it.

Again, in addition to its being a place of trial and a place of pleading, it was a place of communion. Do you recognize it? Jacob called it, “Peniel”–that is, “the face of God”–because there he had seen God face to face. O Beloved, these are things to feel rather than to speak about! To see God! Blessed, indeed, are “the pure in heart” when they get this benediction fulfilled in their experience and come so into union with Christ as to be able to look to God with an eye that is not blinded with fear! Oh to speak with God, pouring out our hearts before Him and to hear Him speaking with us, the promise no longer lying like a dead letter on the page, but leaping out of the page as though alive, as though God had just spoken it and we were hearing it from His Divine mouth! Do you know what this blessing means? Can you read Solomon’s Song through and stay, “I understand it”? Is it your experience that you have ever fed on the body and blood of Christ, having His very life in you? If you have, then you have seen God and it will be said of you, “He blessed him there.” Brothers and Sisters, we miss a thousand blessings because we are too busy to commune with God! We are here, there, and everywhere, except where we ought to be. We are running to this and to that instead of sitting with Mary at the Master’s feet. He blessed Mary as she sat there, and there, too, will He be sure to bless us–

“Oh that I could forever sit
With Mary at the Master’s feet!

Be this my happy choice–
My only care, delight and bliss,
My joy, my Heaven on earth, be this–
To hear the Bridegroom's voice!"

But once more. Where Jacob got the blessing, it was a place of conscious weakness. The Angel touched the sinew inthe hollow of his thigh. While he got the blessing, he got lameness, too, and he might be well content to carry that lameness to his grave! I have often found that the place where I have seen most of my own insignificance, baseness, unbelief and depravity has been the place where I have found a great blessing. Did you ever try to preach and fail in the doing of it–and then found that God blessed you there? Have you ever tried to be earnest with the Sunday school children and were earnest, too, but in your own judgment you made a fool of yourself? Have you not found that God blessed you there? Is it not one of the greatest blessings that can occur to us to be made to think little of ourselves? May not God be enriching us most when He is emptying us and preparing us for the largest possible benediction when He is making us to see how destitute in all things we are?

The most unpleasant places to us in life are often the places where the blessing comes most. "He blessed him there." He took the rich man from his palace and made him live in a cottage, but, "He blessed him there." He took the strong man from his vigor and laid

him on a sick bed. But, “He blessed him there.” He brought down the man of full assurance into a state of trembling and anxiety, but, “He blessed him there.” He brought the man of busy usefulness down to be a patient sufferer, unable to stir hand or foot for the Lord he loved so well, but, “He blessed him there.” He took the man of good repute and allowed his character to be evilly spoken of–and his good name to be withered–but, “He blessed him there.” It is often so. We limp with lameness, with shrinking of the sinew, the precious thing wherein our strength seemed to lie! But that may be the very way to a benediction which otherwise we would never have received.

I would then encourage each one of you to seek a blessing, wherever you may be. I think most of you have been in the house of trial–seek to get a blessing there. The place of pleading, at any rate, is open to you all–get a blessing there. The sacred spot of communion–we may get the blessing that is always to be found there. And I suppose most of you have had your times of tumbling, of stripping and getting very low–may you get a blessing there!

III. So I turn to notice very briefly that THERE ARE OTHER PLACES WHERE CHRISTIANS GET BLESSINGS besides the place where Jacob won his.

Beloved, there is a place (how shall I speak of it?) where the Lord has always blessed us. It is of old in eternity. God isso glad to bless His people that He began doing it long ago! “Long ago,” do I say?

He began before time began! He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. When the Decree was given, when the Covenant was established, when the Election was determined, He blessed each one of us there, if indeed we are Believers in Jesus–

"Sons we are through God's election,
Who in Jesus Christ believe
By eternal destination,
Sovereign Grace we here receive!
Lord, Your mercy
Does both Grace and glory give."

I might point to a thousand spots all down the line of history and say that all of us who are in Christ were blessed there! But I will only linger at the Cross and say, "Where Jehovah was made a curse for us and suffered in our place, He blessed us there! And at that open, empty tomb, from which escaped the living Savior whom the bands of death could not hold, He blessed us there! He who died for our transgression, rose again for our justification and by His Resurrection–He blessed us there! And when He stood on Olivet about to depart and pronounced the blessing upon His disciples, He blessed us there! And as He ascended up on high, leading captivity captive–from His royal chariot He cast down lavishly with, both His hands ten thousand gifts for the sons of men which He had

received even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them–He blessed us there! And up in Heaven where He sits till His work is done, He points to His wounds, and points to our names, and reminds the Father of His eternal love to us! He has blessed us there, for He has raised us up and "made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

But as there are places in your own experience, Beloved, where He has blessed you, I would take some of you back inyour history to the moment when you first knew the Lord. I often try to refresh your memories about that–and I do not think I can do it too often. Where was the spot when, laden with woes and sins, you saw Jesus Christ and looked to Him and at once were lightened? Where was it? When was it? Twenty years ago, perhaps. With some of us, more than that! With others, only two or three years ago. With others of you, perhaps, it is only a week ago! Well, whenever it was, when He led you to see the Savior, He blessed you, there, as you never had been experimentally blessed before! I should not wonder if the day is marked down in your diary, though there is little need it should be, for it is marked on the tablets of your memory and you will never forget it. O blessed spot! O happy moment when Jesus first met with me! He blessed me there! Well, since that time, have there not been other places where He has blessed you?

I might mention every trial you have had and say, “He blessed you there.” I might mention every benefit you have received and

say, “He blessed you there.” But time would fail me. Only I will remind you that when you have been prompt to obey your Lord and keep close to Him–and have not allowed any cloud to come between you and Him, He has blessed you there! If you have kept up that spirit of obedience, take care to let your eyes be to Him as the eyes of a handmaiden are to her mistress, for He will bless you there! And have you not found that when you have been most empty and had least self-reliance, He has blessed you there? When you have been very weak and little in your own esteem, and felt that you were nothing, and less than nothing, and ready to die–has He not blessed you there? When you have been kept low, without an ambitious thought, down on the very ground before Him and have been afraid to look up from a sense of unworthiness, has He not blessed you there? Oh, then, keep to the low places! There is no place so safe as the Valley of Humiliation–

“He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low, no pride.”

He has blessed you there! It would be difficult for me to say where God has not blessed me. Wherever He has led me, wherever He has directed me, seeking His blessing I have found it and, therefore, will I bear my witness to His faithfulness.

Well, by-and-by, when your time will come to die, He will bless you there. Before that time, you may be a sufferer, but He will bless you there. You may lose the dear husband who now is your

strength, or the beloved wife who now is your comfort, but He will bless you there! You may have to go to the grave with one child after another–and you yourself may be very weak and scarcely have life left within you, but He will bless you there! What He has been He will be. If God could change, we might doubt, but since He never changes and is without shadow of turning, let us look back through the many days since we first met Him and He met us. Remember that we have been held up till now and that He has helped us in every time of need! And then ask–

"After so much mercy past,
Will He let us sink at last?"

What I am saying is very commonplace and might suggest itself to anybody here. But, at the same time, when you get into trouble, it does not always suggest itself and you have need to be reminded of these simple principles. He blessed you there, and in such places He will bless you again!

One more word about that, and it is this. Has not He often blessed you in the House of Prayer? Has He not blessedyou in listening to the Gospel? I know He has. Never, therefore, neglect the House of God. Has He not blessed you at the Prayer Meeting? Cannot you say, "He blessed me there"? Well, then, let us see your face there as often as possible! Has He not blessed you at the Communion Table? Oh, if there is under Heaven an ordinance that is Christ's mirror. If there is under Heaven a hand that can withdraw the blind

and pull up the lattices and let us see the King in His beauty, it is the Lord's Supper! He has often blessed us there! Let those who despise the Table of the Lord stay away–but those who have got the blessing will wish to be there often and come again and again, saying, "Sirs, we would see Jesus."

IV. We have seen what Jacob's blessing was and where God blessed Jacob. We remember where He has blessed us and now, in the last place, let me ask, IS NOT THIS ONE OF THE PLACES WHERE WE MAY EXPECT HIM TO BLESS US?

Is there a man here who, never, to his own knowledge, had a blessing from God and who is saying, "I wish God would bless me, even me"? Are you willing, if God helps you, to give up all your sins? Would you wish to be clear of them? Well, Soul, if you desire that, God will bless you right now! For, if you would be rid of sin, God also wishes you to be rid of it–and so you and He are agreed. He will be sure to blot your sins out and tread them under His feet through His dear Son, Jesus Christ. Do you say that you need a blessing? I will put another question to you. Are you willing to have Jesus Christ be your Savior, not in part, but altogether? Will you let Christ be the first and the last? Will you take Him not to be a makeweight, but a Savior who can save you from head to foot, who can give His blood to cleanse you, His righteousness to cover you, Himself to be All-in-All to you? Soul, if you will take a whole Christ, He waits to be received by you! Only trust Him and He is

yours! “To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.”

There was a soul, once, that wanted Christ and, “He blessed him there!” There was a soul once that wanted to be rid of sin and, “He blessed him there.” There was a soul that said, “Lord, save or I perish!” And “He blessed him there.” There was another whom said, “God be merciful to me, a sinner” and, “He blessed him there!” There was one that cried to Him and He did not seem to hear–but at last she came in the crowd and touched His garment’s hem–and He blessed her there! And there was another whom He called a dog. “Yet,” she said, “the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table,” and He blessed her there! O anxious, seeking, timid, trembling Souls, do trust in Jesus! Rest in Jesus and He will bless you now–and you shall go on your way rejoicing!

It was with a young man [In this paragraph, Mr. Spurgeon was evidently describing his own experience at his conversion and afterwards] a day of seeking and he entered a little sanctuary and heard a sermon from the words “Look unto Me, and be you saved.” He obeyed the Lord’s command and, “He blessed him there.” Soon after, he made a profession of his faith before many witnesses, declaring his consecration to the Lord–and “He blessed him there.” And soon he began to labor for the Lord in little rooms among a few people and, “He blessed him there.” His opportunities enlarged and, by faith, he ventured upon daring things for the Lord’s sake–

and “He blessed him there.” A household grew about him and together with his loving wife he tried to train his children in the fear of the Lord–and “He blessed him there.” Then came sharp and frequent trials and he was in pain and anguish, but the Lord “blessed him there.” This is that man’s experience all along–from the day of his conversion to this hour! Uphill and down dale his path has been a varied one, but for every part of his pilgrimage he can praise the Lord, for, “He blessed him there.”

There may perhaps, be some Christians here in trouble. Brother, Sister, I do not ask you what your trouble is, and I do not want to know. But there is a little text I would like to whisper to you–“Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” Will you not trust to Him after that? If so, He will bless you there! Is your trouble concerning temporal need? Let me put this passage into your mouth as a sweet morsel, “Your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him.” Suck that down and He will bless you there! Oh, what a blessing will come out of the marrow and fatness of that thought! Is there a poor Christian here who says, “I feel half ashamed to go to the Communion Table. I am so unworthy”? You never were worthy and never will be! Turn your eyes again to the Cross! Look to the Savior for worthiness. He will bless you there! “I feel so cold and chill,” says another. Think of the Savior’s love to poor, dead, cold sinners such as you are and He will bless you there! If you are very cold, it is no use thinking

of the cold in order to get hot–the best thing is to go to the fire. And if you feel dull and dead, do not try to get better by looking within and examining yourself–fly away to Jesus Christ and He will bless you there! Let all of us now say, “Dear Lord, meet with us, show us Your hands and Your side.” And if we come to His Throne in that spirit of desire, He will bless us there!

The Lord be with us all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Ge 33:9 • I Have Enough

SERMON 2739

"I Have Enough"

"Esau said, I have enough. Jacob said, I have enough."

Genesis 33:9, 11

IT is a very rare thing to meet with people who say that they have enough, for those who have most generally desire more, and those who have little feel that contentment is a thing which cannot reasonably be expected from them. For any person honestly and truthfully to say, "I have enough," is so unusual a circumstance that I do not remember having heard it often. I have done so a few times, at long intervals. This being the case as a rule, it is very remarkable that there should be, in this chapter, a record of two persons who each said, "I have enough." It is specially noteworthy

that this was said by two brothers, for, generally, if one of two brothers is contented, the other is of quite a different disposition. One may be of a very happy and easy-going spirit, but the other possesses enough worry and care to have stocked the two. But here are two brothers, twins, yet each one says, “I have enough.”

It will appear to you as a still more singular fact if you remember that these brothers differed so greatly from one another in other respects. The one was described by the Apostle Paul as a “profane person, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.” Yet he says, “I have enough.” The other was a man who had wrestled with God and who had power with God and with men as a prince! He also says, “I have enough.” It seems to me as if, on that occasion, the blessing of their father Isaac rested upon them both, for you remember that, although Esau did not receive the great blessing–the Covenant blessing–that having gone to Jacob who secured it by deception, yet Esau did receive a great blessing of a temporal kind which Isaac pronounced upon him with all the fervor of a father who loved his son most ardently. Esau thus received what he most wanted, for he cared very little for the spiritual blessing–not being a spiritual man–and when he obtained the temporal blessing, that satisfied his heart and he said, “It is enough.” The blessing of a graciousfather is, indeed, a blessing and though it may not always come as we could wish, in the spiritual fashion, for all sons arenot Jacobs, yet, nevertheless, it does come in some fashion or other.

And, thus, upon Esau there fell the blessing which his father Isaac pronounced upon him when he said, “Behold, your dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of Heaven from above.”

I am going to try to show you that although these two different people did each say, “I have enough,” and although the meaning of their words was in some sense, alike, yet there were great differences as to the innermost meaning of the very same words when they came out of different mouths.

My first observation is that HERE IS AN UNGODLY MAN WHO SAYS THAT HE HAS ENOUGH.

There are some unconverted men who are content with their present possessions–it is not always or often the case,but it is so sometimes. Contentment is not altogether a spiritual gift. It is possessed by some men who make no pretense to spiritual attainments. You must admit that it is so and it is always unfair and unjust, because it is false, to say that merely moral men have no moral virtues, for they sometimes have excellences which, for what they are, shine very brightly and put to shame the defects of professing Christians! A Bristol stone is not a diamond and it is not worth anything like the price of a diamond, but if you were to say that it was not like a diamond, and that it did not shine, youwould do it a gross injustice. Paste gems are not real jewels, but they are made so remarkably like the genuine article that if you were to say that they have no brilliance, you would be denying that which is a

matter of fact. And, in like manner, there are unconverted men whose natural excellences are bright and shining and ought not to be denied. And, though they are not the people of God and in the day when God shall make up His jewels they will not be numbered with them, for they are mere counterfeits and imitations, yet there is much to be seen in them which we should admire and of which we ought to confess the excellence.

There are some men who have not the Grace of God in their hearts, who, nevertheless, are not always fretting and worrying, as certain other people are. It is a comfort for their families that they are contented and it is well that even an Esau should say, "I have enough." It is good for Jacob that Esau should say it and it is good for Esau, himself. It is well for a man's wife and his family that he should be of a happy temperament and of a contented spirit, instead of being, as some are, perpetually grasping, grinding, scraping and doing everything they can to get more to add to what they already possess. Well, then, if even unconverted men sometimes say, "We have enough"–and we do occasionally meet with such persons–what a shame it will be if those who have the Grace of God within them should fall short of even that contentment which worldly men have attained–and should need such persons as these to set them an example in such a matter as this!

Notice, next, that it is sometimes the case that ungodly men are contented, as Esau was when he said, "I haveenough." This may be

because they are persons of easy disposition who are readily pleased. There are some of whom we say that, “they are easy as an old shoe” and, generally, such people are not worth much more than an old shoe. These very easy-going people never do much in the world, but, still, for all that, they are happy in their easy mode of life. They are naturally satisfied with less than contents others. They look on the bright side of things. They are cheerful from their bodily constitution, being endowed with good health. And their mental conformation, which is not quite so brisk as that of some others, but more calm and quiet–possibly more stupid, too–enables them to say more readily than others do, “We have enough.”

I have no doubt that sometimes ignorance is a help to contentment. Hence the common saying, “If ignorance is bliss, ‘tis folly to be wise”–which I will not stay to pull to pieces, though it is open to criticism–for a great mistake lies at the bottom of it. But there are some men who are contented with what they have because they do not know of anything better. They are perfectly satisfied with their present sphere in life, for they were never out of it. They have always lived on the old farm where their father lived before them and where their ancestors have lived for many generations–and they do not know of anything better than that. I would not like to transplant the tree that grows so well where it is and I would be the last to wish to inject cares, anxieties and ambitions into the heart of a man who is naturally contented with his lot.

I do not say that this was Esau's case, however. I think he was contented and said, "I have enough," for quite another reason. Some are contented because they are utterly reckless and only consider present pleasure. They live from hand to mouth and never calculate what may happen tomorrow. Laying by for a rainy day seems to them to be preposterous. If they have sufficient for the passing hour, it is quite enough for them. In some respects, how like this vice is to the virtue which the Christian ought to seek after! Yet it is a vice as we see it in the ungodly, for they are careless, heedless and reckless as was this man, Esau, who, coming in hungry and faint from the chase, sells his birthright for one mess of red pottage, not knowing and not caring what the spiritual value of that birthright might be, but selling it straightaway that he might satisfy his hunger! There are some who are contented for this reason, that they do not exercise thought, they do not give due consideration to their true condition and they say, "We have enough," because they have sufficient for the time present. Such contentment as that, I do not commend–if any of us have it, may God deliver us from it!

Yet let me notice, next, that in the contentment of unconverted men, there are some good points. For, first, it mayprevent greed in them. When a man says, "I have enough," you do not expect him to be one of those who grind the faces of the poor and who must compass sea and land to get more wealth to themselves. Now, in

Esau's case, he declined his brother's present until he was pressed to accept it–and I have no doubt that he honestly declined it on the ground that he had enough. His brother had planned this gift to propitiate his favor, but he tells him that he does not need it, that he loves him without the present–and he has enough–so does not require it. It is a good thing for a man, even if he has not the Grace of God, to be so contented with the things which he has as not to be covetous of the things of others, for covetousness is a great sin and is condemned in that Commandment which says, "You shall not covet anything that is your neighbor's." So far, contentment is a good thing if a man is so satisfied with what he has that he does not covet that which belongs to another!

It is also right and proper that he should not have any envious ill-feeling towards others. If others are better off than they are, some people straightway find fault with Providence and are envious and jealous of the person who appears to be more favored than they are. Esau was not of that mind, for he said to Jacob, "I have enough, my brother. Keep what you have unto yourself." There is another sense implied in the Hebrew, "Be that to you that is yours. May it do you good. May you use and enjoy it yourself!" I like to hear a man say, "My motto is, 'Live, and let live.' I have enough and I wish others to have enough, too. And if another man's 'enough' is larger than mine, I am glad he has it. If he is capable of more enjoyment than I am, let him have it–why should I not rejoice in his joy and thus

suck out of the sweets that belong to him some sweetness for myself by being glad that another is not as poor as I am, or so sick as I am, or so feeble as I am, or being glad that there are some who can excel myself, even in the point of earthly happiness?" So far so good, Esau, that you should say, "I have enough."

Still, there is an evil side to this contentment, as you must have seen in many who have possessed it. In some people ithas led to boasting. They are so satisfied with everything they have that they are quite sure that nobody else owns anything half as good as what they have. If they have a horse, there is never another horse within a hundred miles that can trot like theirs! If one should go faster, it is because their animal was a little out of condition that day. They think there is no such a farm as theirs, or no such a trade as theirs, or nothing in the world that can be compared with what they have. And they are even foolish enough to tell you so! This very contentment that they have breeds glorying in the flesh and glorying in their own possessions–all of which is evil and obnoxious in the sight of God.

We have also seen it lead to a contempt of Divine things–and this is even worse. Esau says, "I have enough," yet he had lost his birthright, he had lost all the blessings of the Covenant, he had lost all part and lot in God and goodness. It is an awful contentment when man can be satisfied without God! What a terrible peace is that when a man is in a peaceful state of mind although he is

unsaved! It is like that dreadful calm, in the tropics, of which we have sometimes read, where there has been no wind for many a day and the very deep is rotting–and everything seems stagnant and full of death. There are some men who have reached that kind of contentment in which their conscience is seared as with a hot iron. They want no Heaven–earth is their Heaven. They desire not to be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom–to fare sumptuously every day, here, is enough bliss for them. They are content not to have the children's portion and to be scourged because God loves them–they wish to have the lot of the bastard who is without chastisement and who is not acknowledged as a son! They have their portion in this life–and that is the worst thing about this kind of contentment–for it argues that God is giving them here all the joy that they will ever have.

Looked at from that standpoint, there was something very dreadful in Esau's saying, "I have enough." If you could have put Jacob in Esau's place, with Jacob's convictions, with Jacob's knowledge of God, with Jacob's desire to be on good terms with God, do you think that he would have said, "I have enough, for I have these camels, and cattle, and sheep, though I have not God"? Oh, no! Jacob would have said, "Enough, my Lord? All this is nothing without You. I promised You if You would give me bread to eat, raiment to put on and bring me again to my father's house in peace, I would be Yours–but I cannot be content without You." So

he grasps the Angel of the Covenant and he says to Him, “I will not let You go, except You bless me,” for he felt that until God blessed him, he could not say, “I have enough."There is no real contentment to a truly-awakened man until he is at peace with God! And it is a horrible thing for any man to be perfectly satisfied while he is under God’s wrath and in danger of eternal destruction–as he certainly is unless he has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ! I would like to put a few very sharp thorns into the pillow of any easy-going people here who are content out of Christ. I would even wound you that you may come to Christ for healing, and smite you that you may resort to the great Physician for the cure which He alone can work, for it is a dreadful thing that you should be at ease when you have such grave cause for disquietude. "There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked.”

II. Now I must pass on to the better part of my subject. HERE IS A GODLY MAN WHO SAYS THAT HE HAS ENOUGH. This is Jacob.

I will begin by remarking that

it is a pity that this is not true of every Christian. It is a sad thing when a man is godly

and yet does not say, “I have enough.” The Apostle does not say that contentment in itself is great gain, but he says, “Godliness with contentment is great gain,” so that it is not the contentment without the godliness that is the gain and, on the other hand, any form of

godliness that does not bring contentment with it should be gravely questioned. A godly man who does not yield ready assent to all God's will ought to pray to be made a godlier man. That man who says, "I am a Christian," and then murmurs, ought to pray to God to forgive his murmuring and to make him more of a Christian. It should be a distinguishing mark of a child of God that even when he is in the greatest agony, and his prayer has the most of disturbance in it, it should never go beyond the line laid down by Christ Himself, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will."

Your heart is breaking, you say , with your troubles. It needs more breaking for, if it were broken, the trouble wouldnot break it! Where our selfishness and our self-will come in, there our sorrows begin. What is needed is not the removal of trouble, but the conquest of self. When the Grace of God has brought us to sing from our hearts the verse we sang just now, all will be well with us–

"Father, I wait Your daily will.
You shall divide my portion still!
Give me on earth what seems You best,
Till death and Heaven reveal the rest."

When God's will and our will are contrary to one another, we may be sure that there is something amiss with us. We are never right till God's will becomes our will and we can honestly say,

“The will of the Lord be done.” Therefore it is a sad thing when a Christian cannot say, “I have enough.” But it is a very sweet thing when he can truthfully say it. Then does he really enjoy life–when he thanks God for what he is and for what he is not–when he thanks God for health, and also for sickness–when he thanks God for gains, and also for losses–when he sings a song in the night, as the nightingale does, as well as a song in the day, as the lark does. He then proves that he does not follow God for what he gets out of Him, as stray dogs will follow a man in the street who feeds them, but that he follows God out of sincere love to Him because God is his Master and he belongs to Him. It is true blessedness, a little Heaven begun below, when the Christian, looking all round, can say of all temporal things, “I have enough.”

It is a still better thing when the Christian has more than enough. Jacob was in that condition, for he felt that hecould give Esau all those goats, sheep, camels, cows, bulls and asses and yet be able to say, “I have enough.” It is a blessing when a godly man feels, “I have more than enough for my own needs, so I am glad that I can help my fellow Christians. I have great joy and delight in aiding the poor and succoring the needy.” When you can sing, with the Psalmist, “My cup runs over,” mind that you call somebody to come and catch what spills, for if you let it run to waste, it may be said of you, “That man cannot be trusted with a full cup.” So let it run over where those with empty cups may come and catch it, to

moisten their parched lips! It is a good thing when the Christian, even though he has but little, can say, “I have not only enough, but I have a little to spare for others who have less than I have.”

The charm of Jacob’s, “enough,” was that God had given it to him. Esau says nothing about God, but Jacob says,“God has dealt graciously with me, and I have enough.” That is indeed a blessing which we can see comes to us from God when, on every mercy there is the mark of our Father’s hand! What are bursting barns if the wheat comes not from God? What are the overflowing wine vats if the juice of the clusters is not from God? What is the good of your gold and silver if God has cursed it? But what a blessing it is when God has smiled upon it all and says to you, “My child, I give you this because you are My child. I make you My steward and I entrust these earthly things to your keeping because I believe that you will use them for My Glory and for the good of your fellow creatures.” This puts a sweetness into the cup which, otherwise, would not have been there, so that it is a very different thing to be a child of God and to have enough–and to be a child of the devil and to have enough! May God grant that we may, each one, know what it is to say with Jacob, “The Lord has dealt graciously with me, and I have enough”!

The correct rendering of our second text–as you may see by the marginal reading of your Bibles–is that Jacob said, “I have all things.” Esau said, “I have enough,” but Jacob said, “I have all

things.” And, as Matthew Henry says,“Esau’s enough was much, but Jacob’s enough was all. He that has much would have more, but he that thinks he has all, is sure he has enough.” Well, he who believes in Christ has all things, for what says the Apostle? “All things are yours; and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” They are all yours in this sense–that all that will be good for you, God must give to you–He has pledged Himself to this. “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” He will therefore not withhold any good thing from you, so that all that is good for you, you are sure to get. All things are yours in the promises and in the Covenant–for that God who took you to be His portion, has given Himself to be your portion–and He is “God all-sufficient.” All things are in Him and, in possessing Him, you have all things!

Oh, what privileges are yours, for, listen! God Himself is yours. “I will be their God,” He says, and that is more thananything else that we can say. Even though all things are yours, you get beyond that when you can say that God is yours! The Eternal Father gives Himself, with all His glorious attributes and with everything that belongs to Him–to you! He gives His very heart to you, “for the Father Himself loves you.” The Son of God has loved you and given Himself for you,and He gives Himself to you. All the merit of His atoning Sacrifice, all the love of His heart, all the wisdom of His head, all the power of His arm, all are yours! His very life is yours, for He says to you, “Because I live, you shall live

also."What an inheritance you have, then, in the Christ of God and in the God of Christ! But then you have also the Holy Spirit to be yours. "He dwells with you, and shall be in you," as in a temple. All light He will bring to you. All life He will maintain in you. All comfort He will bestow upon you. All guidance and all quickening He will give to you! There is nothing which the Spirit of God can work which He will not work in you, according as you may have need of His Divine operations. Thus Father, Son and Holy Spirit, all being ours, what a blessed portion we have! I do not wonder that Jacob said, "I have enough," or that he said, "I have all things." Blessed be the name of the Lord who has made it possible for any son of man to say as much as this!

While I was studying this subject, I met with a sweet poem by that choice daughter of song, Miss Havergal. Each verse is upon this subject–"Enough." I will read the verses, one by one, and add only brief remarks, hoping that you may drink in the fullness of their meaning and say with Jacob, if you are indeed a child of God, "I have enough." The poem begins thus–

"I am so weak, dear Lord, I cannot stand
One moment without You!
But oh, the tenderness of Your enfolding!
And oh, the faithfulness of Your upholding!
And oh, the strength of Your right hand!
That strength is enough for me!"

There is to be none of your own strength, you see, and none that you can borrow from your neighbors. You may have many trials, long pilgrimages, great burdens, but God's tenderness will enfold you, God's faithfulness will uphold you, and God's strength will, indeed, be enough for you!

As I read that last line, I felt as if I could fall on my face and laugh as Abraham did. Omnipotence enough for me? I should think it is! It is enough to uphold this great globe which God has hung upon nothing! It is enough to sustain yon unpillared arch of Heaven which stands firm by the Divine might! It is enough for yon sun that has burned on through all these ages, and whose light has never failed! It is enough for the universe which is almost illimitable! It is enough for every living thing that breathes! It is enough for cherubim and seraphim, and all the angelic host! Then, of course, it is enough for me–a little gnat dancing up and down in the evening sunlight! Suppose a giant should lend me his strength and say to me, "It will be enough for you." I should think it would–but that would be little, indeed, compared with the Almighty God saying to me, "As your days, so shall your strength be." Yes, my Lord, "Your strength is enough for me."

The next verse of the poem is–

"I am so needy, Lord, and yet I know
All fullness dwells in You.
And hour by hour that never-failing treasure

Supplies and fills, in overflowing measure,
My least and greatest need! And so
Your Grace is enough for me."

You remember how Paul says the Lord spoke to him– "My Grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is madeperfect in weakness"? Think what Grace there is in Christ Jesus our Lord–electing Grace, calling Grace, forgiving Grace, renewing Grace, preserving Grace, sanctifying Grace, perfecting Grace, Grace upon Grace, Grace that leads to Heaven! O Beloved, all this Grace is yours and surely there is Grace enough for you! Why do you fear that you will fail? Will God's Grace fail you? Will God's Grace forsake you and permit you to perish by the hand of the enemy? No, verily, then let each Believer say to Him,

"Your Grace is enough for me." Miss Havergal next writes–

"It is so sweet to trust Your Word alone–
I do not ask to see
The unveiling of Your purpose, or the shining
Of future light on mysteries untwining–
Your promise-roll is all my own!
Your Word is enough for me!"

It is very sweet to be able to say of the Lord's promise, "That is enough for me–even if I do not see the fulfillment of it for many a day–the promise itself is enough for me. If the Lord seems to do nothing at all for my help, yet, since He has said, 'I will never leave

you, nor forsake you,' His Word is enough for me." Why, Beloved, you sometimes make a man's word enough for you–the word of a man whom you can trust. And you say, "His word is his bond." But God's Word is backed by His oath–is not that Word enough for you? If so, why do you fret and worry? Rather, you should say to the Lord, "Your Word is enough for me."

Then the gracious poetess continues–

"The human heart asks love, but now I know
That my heart has from You,
All real, and full, and marvelous affection,
So near, so human yet Divine perfection
Thrills gloriously the mighty glow!
Your love is enough for me!

Can you say that–you who have loss some dear one, you who are widowed, you who are childless, you who have been deceived and forsaken–"a woman of a sorrowful spirit"–a man cast down and lonely? Is God's love enough for you? It ought to be, for if all the loves of husbands, wives, lovers, mothers, fathers and children were distilled and the quintessence taken out, it would be but water as compared with the generous wine of God's love! Does God love me? Then, if all the world shall hate me, it matters no more to me than if a single drop of gall should fall into an Atlantic full of sweetness and bliss! This light affliction, which is but for a moment, is not worthy to be compared with the exceeding glory of

being loved of God! Yes, my Lord, “Your love is enough for me.” It is a great heart that God’s love cannot fill–no, I must correct myself and say that it is a base heart–a wicked heart–an unrenewed heart that could not be filled with God’s love! It is not a broken heart, but a divided heart. And when the heart is divided, it does not retain the love of God. Oh, for a heart united to the heart of God! Then shall I say to Him–

“Your love is enough for me!”

The sweet poem closes thus–

“There were strange soul-depths, restless, vast and broad–
Unfathomed as the sea!
An infinite craving for some infinite stilling–
But now Your perfect love is perfect filling!
Lord Jesus Christ, my Lord, my God,
You, You are enough for me!”

So may it be with each of us, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

Ge 35:1 • Family Reformation; or, Jacob's Second Visit to Bethel

SERMON 1395

F*amily Reformation—Or, Jacob's Second Visit To Bethel*

"And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there."

Genesis 35:1

THERE are critical times in most families–times when much decision of character will be needed on the part of the father to guide things aright. They say there is a skeleton in every closet and, if so, I would add that occasionally the unquiet spirit takes to troubling the household and needs to be laid low. There are times when the evil in the hearts of the children and in the nature of the parents becomes especially energetic and brings about difficulties and perplexities, so that if a wrong turn were taken, the most

fearful mischief would ensue. And yet, if there is Divine Grace in the hearts of some or all of the family, a strong and gracious hand at the helm of the ship may steer it right gallantly through the broken waters and bring it safely out of its dangers to pursue its journey much more happily in the future.

Now, such a crisis had come to Jacob's family–things had reached a sad pass and something had to be done. Everything seemed out of gear and matters could not continue any longer as they were. All was out of order and threatened to become much worse. Even the heathen began to smell the ill savor of Jacob's disorganized family and the one alternative was mend or end. A stand must be taken by the head of the house. There must be reform in the household and a revival of religion throughout the whole family. If you notice, Jacob himself was in a bad way. His business was to remain in Canaan a mere sojourner, dwelling in tents, not one of the people, but moving about among them, testifying that he looked for "a city that has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

He expected to inherit the land, but, for the time being, he was to be a stranger and a sojourner as his fathers Abraham and Isaac had been. Yet at Succoth we read that he built booths–scarcely houses, I suppose–but more than tents. It was a compromise and a compromise is often worse than a direct and overt disobedience of a command. He dares not erect a house, but he builds a booth and thus shows his desire for a settled life. And though it is not ours to

judge the purchase of land at Shechem, still, it looks in the same direction. Jacob is endeavoring to find a resting place where Abraham and Isaac had none. I will not speak too negatively, but the Patriarch's acts look as if he desired to find a house for himself where he might rest and be on familiar terms with the inhabitants of the land.

Now the Lord his God would not have it so. The chosen family was intended, by the Divine purpose, to dwell alone and maintain a peculiar walk of separation. The seed of Abraham was ordained to be, in the highest sense, a Nonconformist tribe, a race of separatists! Their God meant them to be a distinct people, entirely severed from all the nations among whom they dwelt and so they must be. But the inclination to be like their neighbors was very manifest in Jacob's family. The spell of Esau's greatness had, no doubt, affected the clan of Jacob. They had, from the Patriarch, himself, down to the youngest child, made very willing obeisance before "my lord Esau," and the homage paid was not without its effect.

That obeisance was an act which, from some points of view, we cannot condemn, but it was scarcely becoming in one who was a Prince with God and elect of the Most High–and its effect could not have been elevating. The sons seem to have taken very readily to paying homage to profane Esau, though they were not little children, but young men. They bowed before their noble-looking

uncle with his grand band of warriors and were, perhaps, fascinated by the charms of so warlike a member of the family, whose sons were dukes and great ones in the land. It added importance to the shepherds to feel that they were related to a great captain!

Now that they had come to Shechem and their father had purchased a piece of land there and had built booths, they felt themselves to be of some importance–and they must go visiting, for everybody loves society. And now comes the mischief of it. Jacob's only daughter must visit with the prince of the people. The daughter of Israel is invited to the dances and the assemblies of the upper circles of the land. It is winked at by the father, possibly, and the brothers aid and abet it. She is often away at the residence of Shechem, the fine young Hivite prince, a very respectable gentleman, indeed, with a mansion and estates. But there comes an evil matter of it not to be mentioned.

Then her brothers, in their hot anger, run into a sin that was quite as evil as Shechem's crime, by way of making some amends for their sister's defilement. With dastardly treachery they slay the whole of the Shechemites and so bring the guilt of murder upon a family which ought to have been holiness unto the Lord! Children of God cannot mix with the world without mischief! The world does hurt to us and we to it when once we begin to be of the world and like it. It is an ill-assorted match. Fire and water were never meant to be blended. The seed of the woman must not mix with the

seed of the serpent. It was when the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair, and took of them as they pleased, that the deluge came and swept away the population of the earth.

Abundant evil comes of joining together what God has put asunder. The corpses of the Shechemites and the indignation of all who heard of the foul deed were the direct result of the attempt to blend Israel with Canaan! And now Jacob's household is filled with fear and the old man, himself–a grand man and a Believer, but a long way off from being perfect–cries out to his sons, in great distress, "You have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites! And I, being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me and slay me. And I shall be destroyed, I and my house." To this his sons only replied, "Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?"–taking his rebuke in a rough fashion and by no means showing any sense of shame.

They do not appear to have been the worst of his sons and yet their rage and cruelty were most terrible. And when they were charged with their crime they justified it. Wretched, indeed, was the condition of Jacob's household! That family was badly arranged from the very beginning. Polygamy needed not to be denounced in so many words in Scripture, because the specimens given of it are all so thoroughly bad that no one can doubt that the thing is radically vicious in its mildest form. It worked shockingly in the

case of Jacob. His wife Rachel, whom he loved so well, had, I fear, been the cause of the introduction into the family of idolatry in the form of teraph, or symbol-worship. She had learned it from her father, Laban, and secretly practiced it. And if Jacob was aware of it, he did not like to say anything to her, his darling, the queen of his soul.

Those bright eyes which had charmed him years ago–how could he dim them with tears? The children of Leah took up their mother's cause and the sons of the handmaids sided with each other–and this made trouble. The many mothers of the family created difficulties and complications of all sorts, so that the household was hard to arrange and keep in good order. It was not what a believing household should be and it is not amazing at all that affairs so thoroughly went awry that it appeared as if even the salt was losing its savor and the good seed was dying before it could be sown in the earth and made to bring forth fruit! A stand must be made. Something had to be done and Jacob must do it.

The Lord comes and He speaks with Jacob. And since the good man's heart was sound towards God's statutes, the Lord had only to speak to him and he obeyed. He was pulled up short and made to look at things and set his house in order. And he did so with that resolution of character which comes out in Jacob when he is brought into a strait, but which at other times is not perceptible. We shall take up this incident at this time and may God grant that we

may find practical teaching in it for ourselves and for our families, by the guidance of His gracious Spirit.

Notice, first, God having appeared to Jacob–what was to be done? Secondly, what happened in the doing of it? And thirdly, what followed.

First, then, WHAT WAS TO BE DONE? The first thing to do was to make a decided move. God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there." You must hasten away from Shechem, with its fertile plains, and make a mountain journey up to Bethel and dwell there. You have been long enough near these Shechemites. Mischief has come from your being so intimate with the world. You must cut a trench between yourselves and the associations you have formed and you must go up to Bethel and remain there.

Every now and then, dear Brothers and Sisters, we shall find it necessary to say to ourselves and to our family, "We must come out from among worldlings. We must be separate. We are forming connections which are injurious to us and we must snap the deceitful bonds. We are being led into habits and customs in the management of the household which are not such as God would approve. We are doing this to secure favor of one and doing that to escape frowns from another–and we are not walking straight with the Lord–therefore, to bring us back to our moorings, we must come right out and go to Bethel, to the place where God met with

us at the first. We must go to our first trysting place and meet with our Lord again, cost whatever the journey may.

"Though some may feel it to be a cross, yet we must begin again and work upon the old lines. Back to our old Puritanism and precision we must go and renew our vows. Let us go right away from worldliness and get to the Bethel of separation and draw near to God again." Have you ever found, Beloved, when you have been very deep in business and very much in the world that you begin to feel heart-sick and cry, "It won't do, I must get out of this! I must retreat into a holy solitude and enjoy a little quiet communion with God"? Have you not sometimes felt, concerning your family, "We are not serving the Lord aright, nor becoming more holy or devoted. Everything appears to be going downhill. We must steer the other way. We must alter our present declining state, in the name of God, or else we cannot expect to have His blessing." I know that you have come to such a place and have resolved to take a decided step. May the Lord help all of us when we see clearly that something is to be done. May we have Grace to end sinful hesitation and set about amendment at all hazards.

Now they must revive old memories. "Go up to Bethel and dwell there. And make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto you when you fled from the face of Esau, your brother." A revival of old memories is often most useful to us, especially to revive the memory of our conversion. The memory of the love of our

espousals, when we went after the Lord into the wilderness and were quite satisfied to be denied and disowned of all–so long as we might but dwell near to Him–that memory is right good for us! It is well to recall that hallowed hour when we, for the first time, set up a family altar and with our dear ones bowed before the Lord! Then we felt that the separated place was a very sweet one and we were most glad to get right away from the world and to live with Christ and in Christ and for Christ and like Christ.

We cannot help blushing as we remember those early days. We did not think that we should have fallen so far short of our ideal. Let the recollection of Bethel, then, come over us to make us remember the loving kindness of the Lord and mourn over our own spiritual declensions. Are you singing–

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still,
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill"?

Then you must come back to your first hours of communion. Where you lost your joy you will find it, for it remains where you left it! If you have neglected your prayer closet. If you have ceased from the searching of the Word of God. If you have departed from a close walking with Christ and if you and your families have fallen into a very low state, so that strangers who look in would hardly know whether yours is a godly house or not–if it is so, then

go back mourning and sighing to Bethel and pray that the old feelings may be revived in you. God grant they may!

And may you, in addition, be led to cry, “How could I have departed so much from the living God? How could I have played the fool and gadded about so much when I might have rested still, in peace, if I had lived near to God?” This, then, was the work which was to be done by Jacob. He had to, first, make a decided move and, secondly, to revive old memories! Have you any call to the same course of action? If so, see you do it. But now, again, Jacob must keep an old vow. I do not quite remember how many years old that vow was, but I suppose some 30 or so. Yet he had not kept it. He was much younger when he knelt and said, “If You will be with me,” and so on, “then this place shall be God’s house.”

He has forgotten that vow, or at least he has not fulfilled it all these years. Be very slow to make vows, Brothers and Sisters–very slow. They should be but very seldom made because all that you can do for God you are bound to do as it is–and a vow is often a superfluity of superstition. But if the vow is made, let it not wait beyond its time and complain to your God. An old and forgotten vow will rot and breed most solemn discomfort to your heart. At first it will gnaw at your conscience. And if your conscience, at last, grows hardened to it, others of your powers will suffer the same petrifying process. Moreover, a forgotten vow will bring chastisement on you and perhaps the rod will fall upon your family.

The connection between Jacob's not going to Bethel and the mischief that happened to his daughter, Dinah, and the sinning of his sons, Levi and Simeon, may not be distinctly traceable, but I feel persuaded that there was a connection–the sin of omission in the father led on to sins of commission in the sons. With the sins of his children, the Lord chastened puts him in a position in which he will remind himself of it. It is so gentle–I was going to say so courteous of our God–He is so gentle, so tender, that He would rather His servant should remember the vow than be distinctly told of it in so many words. See, then, Jacob is bound to go and do according to his solemn pledge.

Now, dear Friend, it may be that part of the business you and I have to do in order to set our families right is to remember something we said we would do years ago but which we have not done. We have had the ability for a long while, but the willingness has not been with us. Let us now bestir ourselves and clear our consciences in the matter. God alone knows of it–let not this secret thing lie festering in our hearts and grieving the Holy Spirit! I speak, I believe, very closely home to some of my hearers. Perhaps the message is sufficiently distinct and I had better say no more. Let your own hearts remember your neglected promises.

It appeared to Jacob, next, that if he was to fulfill his vow, it was necessary to reform his whole house, for he could not serve the Lord and worship other gods. He said to all that were with him–to

his sons first and then to his hired servants and the rest–"Put away the strange gods that are among you." Yes, it must come to that! If I am to get back to my old position with God I must break my idols–

"The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from its throne,
And worship only Thee."

The idols of the family–the acts and deeds of the young folk which would grieve God, the doings of the elder ones which are inconsistent with a profession of faith in Jesus, the ill tempers that have been indulged, the divisions of heart which have come up in the family–all that is sinful and unlovely must go, if we are to get right again. There must be a general breaking and burying of idols, or we cannot worship the God of Bethel!

And next Jacob said, "Be clean." There was to be, I suppose, a general washing indicative of purgation of character by going to God with repentance and seeking forgiveness. Jacob also said, "Change your garments." This was symbolic of an entire renewal of life, though I fear they were not all renewed. At any rate, this is what was symbolized by, "Change your garments." Alas, it is easier to say this to our families than it is to get them to do it! And do we wonder since it is so much easier for ourselves to say than it is for ourselves to do! Yet, Beloved, if your walk is to be close with God. If you are to commune with the God of Bethel, you must be

cleansed. The Lord cannot commune with us while we wallow in sin. “What accord has Christ with Belial?”

Sin must be put away! The best Believer that lives must wash his feet if he is to draw near to God as he has done before. All this Jacob was to undertake and to him, who had become so lax with his family, it was no small work to screw up his courage and say to Rachel and all of them–“Put away the strange gods that are among you and be clean. And change your garments.” Well, then, the next and last thing which they were to do was to celebrate special worship. “Let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress and was with me in the way which I went.”

When we get wrong and feel that there must be a decided change, we must set apart special times of devotion. We must say to our soul, “Soul, Soul you have fed so little lately. This leanness of yours comes of neglecting spiritual feasting. Come, you must humble yourself! You must lay yourself low before God. You must approach the Lord with lowly reverence and beg to be refreshed with His Presence. You must set apart more time for feeding upon Christ and upon His Word. You must never be quiet till you become, again, full of Divine Grace and of the Holy Spirit.” In families it is often well, when you see that things are wrong, just to call the household together and say, “We must draw near unto God with peculiar earnestness, for we are going astray. We have not

given up family prayer, but we must now make it special and with double zeal draw near unto God."

I am afraid that some of you neglect family prayer. If you do I am sure it will work evil in your households. The practice of family prayer is the castle of Protestantism. It is the grand defense against all attacks by a priestly caste who set up their temples and tell us to pray there and pray by their mediation. No, but our homes are temples and every man is a priest in his own house! This is a brazen wall of defense against superstition and priestcraft! Family prayer is the nutriment of family piety and woe to those who allow it to cease!

I read the other day of parents who said they could not have family prayer. Someone asked this question, "If you smitten down with fever each morning that you neglected prayer, what then?" Oh, then they would have it. "And if there were a law that you should be fined five shillings if you did not meet for prayer, would you find time for it?" Yes. "And if there were five pounds given to all who had family prayer, would you not by some means arrange to have it?" Yes. And so the enquirer went on with many questions and wound up with this last one–"Then is it not just an idle excuse when you, who profess to be servants of God, say that you have no time or opportunity for family prayer?"

Should idle excuses rob God of His worship and our families of a blessing? Begin to pray in your families and especially if things

have gone wrong, get them right by drawing near to God more distinctly. Did I hear you say, “We do not want to be formalists.” No, I am not afraid you would be! I am afraid of your neglecting anything that tends towards the good of your household and your own spiritual growth and, therefore, I pray you labor at once to acquaint yourselves with God and be at peace. Draw near the Lord, again, more thoroughly than you have done before, for it is the only way by which the backslidings of persons and families are at all likely to be corrected! God grant a blessing with these words by the power of His Holy Spirit.

II. And now I come to my second point–WHAT HAPPENED IN THE DOING OF IT? Well, several things happened and one or two of those were rather surprising. The first was that all heartily entered into the reforming work. I am sure they did, because the 4 th verse says, “They gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hands”–allof them–“and all their earrings which were in their ears.” He had not said anything about their earrings. Was there any harm in their earrings? For a woman to wear an earring is not such a dreadful thing, is it? Perhaps not, but I suppose that these earrings were charms and that they were used in certain incantations and heathenish customs. It must have been a very sad discovery to Jacob, who himself could not have endured it, to find that wicked superstitions had come into his tents through his winking at the teraphs.

The evil had gone on in secret and though suspected, was not actually under Jacob's eye. I dare say he was not quite sure that the teraphs were in the tent and did not want to be quite sure, because it was Rachel, you know, who had them, and she–well, she was Rachel–and she had been brought up so differently from Jacob that perhaps Jacob thought he must not press her too severely upon the point. Perhaps he said to himself, "When I talk with her she does not seem at all idolatrous. I believe she is a good woman and I must remember how she was brought up. And as she comes from a highchurch family I must let her have her little symbols–I do not know for sure that she has a teraph–I have never absolutely seen it." But there it was and it was the nucleus of superstition! She and those around her had become corrupted with the superstitions of the heathen–and these earrings were the indication of their superstitious feeling, if not the instruments of divination!

Now, as soon as Jacob speaks, they all give up their idols and their earrings. I like this. It is a blessed thing when a man of God takes a stand and speaks, and finds that his family are all ready to follow. Perhaps it was the fear that was upon them just then–the fear of the nations round about which made them so obedient. I am not sure it was a work of Divine Grace, but still, as far as outward appearances went, there was a willing giving up of all that could have grieved the Lord. And you will sometimes be pleased, Christian Friends, when things get wrong and you determine to set

them right, to see how others will yield to your determination. You ought to take courage from this. Perhaps the very person of whom you are most afraid will be the most ready to yield and the most eager to help!

You have been afraid of Rachel, but she has such love for you that she will do anything for you and give up her teraphs at once. The sons who were so rough in speaking to you when you spoke in your own name and spoke about yourself and said, "You have made me to stink," and so on, will answer very differently when you speak in God's name! There will be such a power going with God's Word that they will yield freely and heartily. They did so in Jacob's case. All of them gave up their idols and they buried them in the earth beneath the oak. Would God a day would come to old England when all the crucifixes and priestly vestments–and the whole ruck of the symbols and emblems of superstition–could be buried under some grand old Gospel oak, never to be disinterred again! If we do not see this in the nation we will at least secure it in our own houses.

Another circumstance happened, namely, that protection was afforded him–immediate and complete. "They journeyed and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob." In their way were many cities and, as it were, hemmed them in and the people might have turned out and cut the little tribe of Israel to pieces. But a

message had gone forth from the Lord of Hosts, saying, “Touch not My anointed, and do my Prophets no harm.” And so they journeyed in safety. “When a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him,” and now that Jacob has determined to set things right, he walks unharmed!

You do not know how much of personal trouble which you are now bearing will vanish as soon as you determine to stand up for God! You do not know how much of family difficulty that now covers you with dread will vanish when you, yourself, have feared the Lord and have come forth decidedly and determinedly to do the right thing. No danger shall befall the man who walks with God, for with such a Companion malaria breathes health and curses become blessings! But you know not where you are going and into what thick woods you plunge when you once forsake the Lord and walk contrary to His mind. The Lord your God is a jealous God and if you do not respect His jealousy and walk before Him with holy fear, you shall be made to feel His wrath! Since He has known you, only, of all the people of the earth, for that very reason He will chasten you for your iniquities. This plague of evils shall be stopped when you purge out your idols, but not till then!

In the next place the vow was performed. They came to Bethel and I can almost picture the grateful delight of Jacob as he looked upon those great stones among which he had lain down to sleep, a lonely man. Perhaps he searched for the stone that had been his

pillow. Probably it still stood erect as part of the pillar which he had reared in memory of the goodness of God and the vision he had seen. There were many regrets, many confessions, many thanksgivings at Bethel! "With my staff I came to this place, but now I am become two bands. Look, my sons! Look, Rachel! Look, all of you–this is the spot where, when I fled from Esau with nothing but my staff and wallet, I laid down and the Lord appeared to me! And He has kept me all my life long! Come, help me as I put together the unhewn stones to make an altar. And this great stone, behold we will pour oil on the top of it and we will together sing the praises of El-Beth-el–the God of the House of God, the God who is a House for His people, the God who has a household of which we form a part–the God under whose wings we seek refuge."

I have no doubt that Jacob and his house spent a very happy time at Bethel, where mourning softened thankfulness and joy sweetened penitence–where every sacred passion in the Patriarch's soul found vent and poured itself out before the Lord. He thought of the past, rejoiced in the present and hoped for the future, for now he had come to be with God and to draw near to Him. But what else happened? Why, now there came a death and a funeral. Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died. Her name means a bee. And we have had old nurses, ourselves, have we not, who have been like busy bees in our household? Dear old Deborah nursed our mother

and nursed us and is still willing to nurse our children! We do not grow that sort of people, now, they tell me. I am afraid we do not grow the same kind of masters and mistresses that they used to have in years gone by, either!

I am not sure about it, but I believe that if there were more Rebekahs there would be more Deborahs. Somehow I think we are generally about as well treated as we treat others and we get measured into our bosoms very much that which we ourselves measure out. There may be exceptions and there are, but that is the general rule. Well, dear old Deborah had left Laban's house and gone with Miss Rebekah when she went into the far country to be married. She had taken care of her mistress' two boys, Jacob and Esau, and had set her heart on the same boy that the mother loved so well and she had sorrowed with Rebekah when he, having grown up, had been compelled to save his life by fleeing from his father's household.

I cannot tell when she came to live with Jacob. Perhaps Rebekah sent her to live with her favorite son because she thought there were so many in the family that somebody was needed to look after them all–a person old and discreet to come between Jacob and the perpetual jars of the household. No doubt Jacob often found it pleasant to make the good old soul a confidante in his troubles. And now she dies and they bury her under the oak which they call the oak of weeping–Allonbachuth. Is it not strange that when you are

trying to get right, there comes a great sorrow? No, it is not strange, for you are trying to purge out the old leaven–and the Lord is going to help you. You are trying to set everything right with Him and He comes and takes away one of the best people in the house who helped you most of all–one of the staunchest old Christian people that you ever knew–whom you wanted to live forever!

And He does it not to hinder but to help you in your labor. He knows best–a touch of the pruning knife was needed by the vine of Israel that it might bring forth more fruit. The good nurse died when they seemed to need her most, but it was better for her to die then, than that she should have departed when Dinah's shame and Simeon's crime had made the household dark. It was better that she should live to see them purged from idols and on the road to her old master Isaac, for then she would feel as if she could say, "Now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation."

The moral of the incident is that the Lord may heat the fire all the more when He sees the refining process going on and we must receive the further trial as a token of love and not of anger if He smites us heavily when we are honestly endeavoring to seek His face.

III. This is what happened while they were doing it. Now we close with the third head, namely, WHAT FOLLOWED. All this putting away of idols and going to Bethel–did anything come of it?

Yes. First, there was a new appearance of God. Read the 9 th verse. “And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, andblessed Him.” This was a new appearance of God. Some of you will not understand what I say, but I leave it to those who know the Lord–there are times when God is very near to us. I wish it were always so, but some of us can mark out epochs in our spiritual history in which we were wonderfully conscious that God drew near to us. We felt His Presence and were glad. The Lord seemed to put us in the cleft of the rock and make His Glory pass before us.

I have known such times. Would God I knew them more often! It is worth while to have been purged and cleansed and to have done anything to be favored with one of those Divine visits in which we almost cry with Paul, “Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell: God knows.” A clear view of God in Christ Jesus and a vivid sense of Jesus' love is a sweet reward for broken idols and Bethel reformations!

The next thing that came of it was a confirmation to Jacob of his title of Prince which conferred a dignity on the whole family. For a father to be a prince ennobles all the clan. God now puts upon them another dignity and nobility which they had not known before, for a holy people are a noble people. You that live in God’s Presence are in the peerage of the skies. “He raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts the needy out of the dunghill that He may set him

with princes, even with the princes of His people." He first makes them princes and then, to crown it, He makes them princes of princes, because if all His people are princes, it follows that those who are princes among His people are princes among princes! The Lord has a way of conferring high spiritual dignities upon those who seek to order their households aright and to keep their hearts clean and chaste before Him. Such honor have all the saints who fully follow the Lord. God help us to keep close to Jesus and enjoy daily communion with Him.

And then, next, there was given to Jacob and his family a vast promise which was, in some degree, an enlargement of a promise made to Isaac and to Abraham before. "I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall be of you and kings shall come out of your loins." I do not remember anything said to Abraham about a company of nations, or about kings coming out of his loins, but out of the loins of Israel, a prince, princes may come. God puts upon His promise a certain freshness of vastness and infinity now that Jacob has drawn near to Him. Brothers and Sisters, God will give us no new promise, but He will make the old promises look wondrously new! He will enlarge our vision so that we shall see what we never saw before!

Have you ever had a painting which hung neglected in some back room? Did it, one day, strike you that you would have it framed and brought into a good light? When you saw it properly hung on the

wall, did you not exclaim, “Dear me! I never noticed that picture before. How wonderfully it has come out”? And many and many a promise in God’s Word will never be noticed by you till it is set in a new frame of experience. Then, when it is hung up before you, you will be lost in admiration of it! Sin makes the promises to be like old pictures coated over with dirt. There must be a cleansing of ourselves and then it will be like a careful cleaning of the picture, from which no tint suffers, but all receive a new bloom.

God will make His Bible seem a new book to you. You will find joy in every page and your soul shall dance for joy as you see the great things which God has prepared for you, yes, and for your children, also, if they are walking in the truth, for, “the promise is unto us and to our children, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.” With Jacob, by the new appearing of the Lord, the inheritance was confirmed, for thus runs the Scripture–“The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to you I will give it and to your seed after you will I give the land.” So, dear Friends, all the blessed Covenant of Grace with all the promises shall be made distinctly and clearly yours when you have gone to Bethel and, with holy decision, drawn near to the Lord your God!

I will not detain you except to say that you may also expect very familiar communion. Notice the 13 th verse, “Godwent up from him in the place where He talked with him.” Talked with him! Talked with him! It is such a familiar word. God talking with man.

We say “conversing” when we are speaking in a dignified manner, but, “talking!” Oh that blessed condescension of God when He speaks to us in the familiar tones of His great love in Christ Jesus! There is a way of conversation with God which no tongue can explain–they only know it who have enjoyed it! Brethren, there are fellowships with God to be enjoyed of which a large number of Christians have no idea. He who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in Heaven and earth dwells with lowly ones! Idols broken, garments changed, altars built and the soul kept near to God–and then “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will show them His Covenant.” This is so inestimably precious a gift that I urge you to seek after it, urging myself most of all.

The chapter closes with the death of Rachel and so, perhaps, when we get nearest to God there may come another trial. The old tradition was that no man could see God’s face and live. It was not true, but it contained a truth, for scarcely can a man enter the secret place of thunder and have communion with God without special trial. Yes, it is even so, for “even our God is a consuming fire.” He asks the question, “Who shall dwell with the everlasting burnings?” And the answer is, “He that has clean hands and a pure heart, that shuts his ears from hearing of blood” and so on. “He shall dwell on high.”

When we come to dwell with Him who is fire, the fire must burn and we must feel it. That hallowed flame will consume much that our unhallowed flesh would like to keep and there will not be a burning without our enduring sharp smarts and pain. God's furnace is in Zion and His fire is in Jerusalem. He will purify the sons of Levi as silver is purified. "Who shall abide the day of His coming? For He will be as a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap." Yet if we are in a right state, that is exactly what we need! O that our sinfulness were wholly burned up! Trial is welcomed if sin may but be conquered! Even Rachel may die if Jesus lives in us but the more!

Lord, give us Grace and Your Presence–even if we pass through the furnace a thousand times in consequence thereof. Hear us, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Ge 39:2 • A Miniature Portrait of Joseph

SERMON 1610

A *Miniature Portrait Of Joseph*

"The Lord was with Joseph."

Genesis 39:2

SCRIPTURE frequently sums up a man's life in a single sentence. Here is the biography of Joseph sketched by Inspiration–"God was with him," so Stephen testified in his famous speech recorded in Acts 7:9. Here is the life story of Abraham–"Abraham believed God." Of Moses, we read, "The man Moses was very meek." Take a New Testament life, such as that of John the Baptist, and you have it in a line–"John did no miracles, but all things that he spoke concerning Jesus were true." The mere name of John–"that disciple whom Jesus loved"–would serve for

an epitaph of him. It pictures both the man and his history. Holy Scripture excels in this kind of full-length miniature paintings! Michelangelo is said to have drawn a portrait with a single stroke of his crayon and so the Spirit of God sketches a man's life in a single sentence–"The Lord was with Joseph."

Observe, however, that the portraits of Scripture give us not only the outer, but the inner life of the man. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks upon the heart and so the Scriptural descriptions of men are not of their visible life, alone, but of their spiritual life. Here we have Joseph as God saw him, the real Joseph. Externally it did not always appear that God was with him, for Joseph did not always seem to be a prosperous man. But when you come to look into the inmost soul of this servant of God, you see his true likeness–he lived in communion with the Most High and God blessed him–"The Lord was with Joseph and he was a prosperous man."

Dear Friends, how would you like to have your inner biography sketched? How would your soul appear, if set out in detail before all the world as to its desires, affections and thoughts? Many lives have looked well on paper, but beneath their surface the biographer never dared to dive, or, perhaps, could not have dived had he been anxious to do so! It is often thought wise, in writing a man's life, to suppress certain matters. This may be prudent if the design is to guard a reputation, but it is scarcely truthful. The Spirit of God

does not suppress the faults, even, of those whom we most admire, but writes them fully, like the Spirit of Truth, as He is. The man who, above others, was "a man after God's own heart," was yet, in some points, exceedingly faulty and he committed one foul deed which will remain, through all time, a blemish upon his character.

There was in David so firm and undeviating an attachment to the Lord God and so sincere a desire to do right–and so deep a repentance when he had erred–that the Lord still regarded him as after His own heart although He smote him heavily for his transgressions. David was a truly sincere man in spite of the faults into which he fell and it is the heart of David which is sketched. So here, the Spirit is not looking so much at Joseph as a favorite child, or an Egyptian prime minister, as at the innermost and truest Joseph and, therefore, He thus describes him, "the Lord was with Joseph." This striking likeness of Joseph strongly reminds us of our Master and Lord, that greater Joseph, who is Lord over all the world for the sake of Israel.

Peter, in his sermon to the household of Cornelius, said of our Lord that He, "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him." Exactly what had been said of Joseph! It is wonderful that the same words should describe both Jesus and Joseph, the perfect Savior and the imperfect Patriarch! When you and I are perfected in Divine Grace, we shall wear the image of Christ and that which will describe

Christ will also describe us! Those who live with Jesus will be transformed by His fellowship till they become like He. To my mind, it is very beautiful to see the resemblance between the First-Born and the rest of the family; between the great typical Man, the Second Adam and all those men who are quickened into His life and are one with Him.

This having the Lord with us is the inheritance of all the saints, for what is the Apostolic benediction in the Epistles but a desire that the Triune God may be with us? To the Church in Rome, Paul says, "Now the God of peace be with you all." To the Church in Corinth, he writes, "The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen." To the Thessalonians, he says, "The Lord be with you all." Did not our glorious Lord say, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"? How better could I salute you this morning than in the words of Boaz to the reapers, "The Lord be with you"? What kinder answer could you give me than, "The Lord bless you"?

High up upon the mountains which form the back wall of Mentone I happened, one day, to meet a Quaker in the usual costume. He was a warm-hearted lover of all who love Jesus. He saluted me and we found great unity of spirit. On parting, I said, "Friend, the Lord be with you." And he answered, "And with your spirit," adding, "It is the first bit of the liturgy that I have ever

used.” Truly, the more often we can use it with our hearts, the better, for none can object to it! Thus do I say to all of you this day, “The Lord be with you!” And I know that you are responding, “And with your spirit.” May you find that your desire is granted, by the Holy Spirit’s being with my spirit that I may speak words which shall refresh your hearts!

Now let us think of Joseph and see what we can learn from him. “The Lord was with Joseph.” Let us consider, first, the fact. Secondly, the evidence of that fact. And thirdly, the result of that fact.

First, we will run over Joseph’s life and note THE FACT–“The Lord was with Joseph.” God was gracious to Joseph as a child. His father loved him because he was the son of his old age and also because of the gracious qualities which he saw in him. Before he was 17 years of age, God had spoken with him in dreams and visions of the night, of which we read that, “His brothers envied him; but his father observed the saying.” Dear young people, it may not be that God will appear to you in dreams, but He has other ways of speaking to His young Samuels. You remember He said, “Samuel, Samuel,” and the beloved child answered, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.” May you answer in the same manner to the call of God by His Word.

It was the happy privilege of some of us before we had left boyhood and girlhood to have received gracious communications

from God–He led us to repentance, He led us to faith in Christ and He revealed His love in our hearts before we had left the schoolroom and the playground! They begin well who begin early with Christ! He will be with us to the end if we are with Him at the beginning! If Joseph had not been a godly boy, he might never have been a gracious man. Divine Grace made him to differ from his brothers in youth and he remained their superior all his days. If we are gracious while we are yet children, we may be sure that the Lord will be gracious to us even should we live to old age and see our children's children.

Early piety is likely to be eminent piety. Happy are those who have Christ with them in the morning, for they shall walk with Him all day and sweetly rest with Him at eventide. "The Lord was with Joseph" when Joseph was at home and He did not desert him when he was sent away from his dear father and his beloved home and was sold for a slave. Bitter is the lot of a slave in any country and it was worst of all in those early days. We are told by Stephen that the Patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt–but the Lord was with him–even when Joseph was being sold the Lord was with him. It must have been a very dreadful journey for him across the desert, urged onward by those rough Ishmaelites, probably traveling in a gang, as slaves do to this day in the center of Africa. May God put an end to the abominable system!

This delicate child of an indulgent father, who had been clothed with a princely garment of many colors, must now wear the garb of a slave and march in the hot sun across the burning sand. But never was captive more submissive under cruel treatment. He endured as seeing Him who is invisible! His heart was sustained by a deep confidence in the God of his father, Jacob, for, "Jehovah was with him." I think I see him in the slave market exposed for sale. We have heard with what trembling anxiety the slave peers into the faces of those who are about to buy. Will he get a good master? Will one purchase him who will treat him like a man, or one who will use him worse than a brute? "The Lord was with Joseph" as he stood there to be sold and he fell into good hands!

When he was taken away to his master's house and the various duties of his service were allotted to him, the Lord was with Joseph. The house of the Egyptian had never been so pure, so honest, so honored before. Beneath Joseph's charge it was secretly the temple of his devotions and manifestly the abode of comfort and confidence. That Hebrew slave had a glory of character about him which all perceived and, especially his master, for we read–"His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hands. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him–and his master made him overseer over his house and all that he had, he put into Joseph's hands. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him

overseer in his house and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house and in the field."

Joseph's diligence, integrity and gentleness won over his master, as well they might. O that all of you who are Christian servants would imitate Joseph in this and so behave yourselves that all around you may see that the Lord is with you! Then came a crisis in his history, the time of testing. We see Joseph tried by a temptation in which, alas, so many perish! He was attacked in a point at which youth is peculiarly vulnerable. His comely person made him the object of unholy solicitations from one upon whose goodwill his comfort greatly depended. And had it not been that the Lord was with him, he would have fallen. The mass of mankind would scarcely have blamed him had he sinned–they would have cast the crime upon the tempter and excused the frailty of youth. I say not so! God forbid I should, for in acts of uncleanness, neither of the transgressors may be excused! But God was with Joseph and he did not slide when set in slippery places.

Thus Joseph escaped that deep pit into which the abhorred of the Lord fall. He was rescued from the snare of the strange woman, of whom Solomon has said, "She has cast down many wounded; yes, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to Hell, going down to the chambers of death." Slavery, itself, was a small calamity compared with that which would have happened to

young Joseph had he been enslaved by wicked passions. Happily, the Lord was with him and enabled him to overcome the tempter with the question, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” He fled. That flight was the truest display of courage! It is the only way of victory in sins of the flesh. The Apostle says, “Flee youthful lusts which war against the soul.”

When Telemachus was in the isle of Calypso, his mentor cried, “Fly, Telemachus, fly! There remains no hope of a victory but by flight.” Wisely Joseph left his garment and fled, for God was with him. The scene shifts again and he who had been, first, a favored child at home and then a slave–and then a tempted one–now becomes a prisoner. The prisons of Egypt were, doubtless, as horrible as all such places were in the olden times and here is Joseph in the noisome dungeon! He evidently felt his imprisonment very much, for we are told in the Psalms that “the iron entered into his soul.” He felt it a cruel thing to be under such a slander and to suffer for his innocence. A young man so pure, so chaste, must have felt it to be sharper than a whip of scorpions to be accused as he was. Yet as he sat down in the gloom of his cell, the Lord was with him.

The degradation of a prison had not deprived him of his Divine Companion. Blessed be the name of the Lord, He does not forsake His people when they are in disgrace! No, He is more pleasant with them when they are falsely accused than at any other time and He

cheers them in their low estate. God was with Joseph and very soon the kindly manners, the gentleness, the activity, the truthfulness, the industry of Joseph had won over the keeper of the prison so that Joseph rose, again, to the top and was the overseer of the prison! Like a cork, which you may push down, but it is sure to come up again, so was Joseph! He must swim–he could not drown–the Lord was with Him! The Lord's Presence made him a king and a priest wherever he went and men tacitly acknowledged his influence. In the little kingdom of the prison Joseph reigned, for, "God was with him."

He will rise higher than that, however, when opportunity arises for a display of prophetic power. Two of those under his charge appeared to be despondent one morning and, with his usual gentleness, Joseph asked, "Why do you look so sad today?" He was always kindly and sympathetic and so they told him their dreams and he interpreted them as the events actually fell out. But why did he interpret dreams? It was because God was with him! Joseph tells them, then and there, that "interpretations belong unto God." It was not that he had knowledge of an occult art, or was clever at guessing, but the Spirit of God rested upon him and so he understood the secrets veiled beneath the dreams. This led to further steps, for after having been tried from 17 to 30–after having served 13 years' apprenticeship to sorrow–he came to stand before Pharaoh and God is with him there, too!

You can see that he is inwardly held up, for the Hebrew youth stands boldly forth and talks of God in an idolatrous court! Pharaoh believed in multitudes of gods–he worshipped the crocodile, the ibis, the bull–and all manner of things, even down to leeks and onions, so that one said of the Egyptians, "Happy people, whose gods grow in their own gardens!" But Joseph was not ashamed to speak of his God as the only living and true God. He said, "What God is about to do He showed unto Pharaoh." Calmly, and in a dignified manner, he unravels the dream and explains it all to Pharaoh, disclaiming, however, all credit for wisdom. He says, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." God was with him, indeed!

Joseph was made ruler over all Egypt and God was with him. Well did the king say, "Can we find such a man as this is in whom the Spirit of God is?" His policy in storing up corn in the plenteous years succeeded admirably, for God was evidently working by him to preserve the human race from extinction by famine. Joseph's whole system, if looked at as executed in the interest of Pharaoh, his master, was beyond measure sensible and successful. He was not the servant of the Egyptians–Pharaoh had promoted him–and he enriched Pharaoh and, at the same time, saved a nation from hunger. God was with him in bringing down his father and the family into Egypt and locating them in Goshen. And God was with Joseph till he came to die, when he, "took an oath of the children of

Israel, saying God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here."

The Lord was with him and kept him faithful to the Covenant and the covenanted race, even to the close of a long life of 110 years! He died faithful to the cause of the God of his fathers, for he would not be numbered with Egypt, with all its learning and all its wealth. He chose to be accounted an Israelite and to share with the chosen race whatever their fortunes might be. He, like the rest of the Patriarchs, died in faith, looking for the promised inheritance and, for its sake, renouncing the riches and glories of the world, for the Lord was with him!

II. We shall next review THE EVIDENCE OF THE FACT that God was with him. What is the evidence that the Lord was with Joseph? The first evidence of it is this–he was always under the influence of the Divine Presence and lived in the enjoyment of it. I shall not need to quote the instances–not all of them, at any rate, for everywhere, whenever Joseph's heart speaks–he lets you know that he is conscious that God is with him. Take him, especially, under temptation. Oh, what a mercy it was for him, that he was a God-fearing man! "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against Potiphar?" No. Yet he would have sinned against Potiphar, who had been a kindly master to him. Does he say, "How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against this woman"? for it would have been a sin against her.

No! Just as David said, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight,” making the main point and consideration to be sin against God, so did Joseph, as he fled from the seducer, argue thus–“How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” Oh, if you and I always felt that God were near, looking steadily upon us, we should not dare to sin! The presence of a superior often checks a man from doing what else he might have ventured on. And the Presence of God, if it were realized, would be a perpetual barrier against temptation and would keep us steadfast in holiness!

When Joseph, at any time afterwards, spoke of God–when God helped him not only to stand against temptation but to do any service–you will notice how he always ascribes it to God. He will not interpret Pharaoh’s dream without first telling him, “It is not in me: God has showed Pharaoh what He is about to do.” He was as conscious of the Presence of God when he stood before the great monarch as when he refused that sinful woman! It was the same in his domestic life. Let me read out of his family register. “And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah, priest of On, bare unto him. And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh: For God, said he, has made me forget all my toil, and all my father’s house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

When his aged father said to him, “Who are these?” Joseph replied very beautifully, “They are my sons, whom God has given me in this place.” I am afraid that we do not habitually talk in this fashion, but Joseph did. Without the slightest affectation, he spoke out of his heart, under a sense of the Divine Presence and working. How like he is, in this, to our Divine Lord! I cannot help speaking of it. If there is any good thing more marked about our Lord Jesus than another it is His sense of the Divine Presence. You see it when He is a child–“Know you not that I must be about My Father’s business?” You hear it in the words, “I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.” And again, “I know that You hear Me always.” You perceive it forcibly in the last moment of His earthly life, when the sharpest pang that tortures Him is that which makes Him cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?” The Presence of God was everything to Christ as it was to Joseph.

Now, if you and I set the Lord always before us–if our soul dwells in God–depend upon it, God is with us! There is no mistake about it. If you are under the influence of that text, “You, God, see me,” you may be sure that His Presence will go with you and He will give you rest. No man ever perceived God to be present and, therefore, walked before Him in holiness, and afterwards discovered that he had been under a delusion. Grace in the life proves that the God of Grace is with us! The next evidence is this–God was certainly with Joseph because he was pure in heart.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” No other can do so. God will not manifest Himself to those whose hearts are unclean. He that has clean hands and a pure heart, he shall dwell on high. Our Lord Jesus said, “If a man loves Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love Him, and we will come unto Him, and make our abode with Him.”

When the heart is shocked at sin and enamored of holiness, then it can enter into communion with God, but not till then. “Can two walk together unless they are agreed?” When I hear some professors admit that they have little communion with God, can I wonder at it? How can God have fellowship with us unless we walk obediently in His ways? What fellowship has light with darkness, or what concord has Christ with Belial? The intense purity of Joseph was proof that the thrice holy God was always with him! He will keep the feet of His saints. When they are tempted, He will deliver them from evil, for His Presence sheds an atmosphere of holiness around the heart in which He dwells.

The next evidence in Joseph’s case was the diligence with which he exercised himself wherever he was. God was with Joseph and, therefore, the man of God hardly cared as to the outward circumstances of his position, but began at once to work that which is good. He was in the pit–yes, but the Lord was with him and the pit was not horrible to him. He pleaded with his brothers and although they would not hear, he did his duty in warning them of

their crime. He was carried captive of the Ishmaelites, but in the caravan he was safe, for God was with him. When he came to be a slave in Potiphar's house, the Lord was with him and he was a prosperous man! The change of scene was not a change of his dearest Company! He did not strike an attitude and make a display of his grand intentions, but he went to work where he was and performed ordinary duties with great heartiness–for the Lord was with him!

Many would have said, "I have been unrighteously sold for a slave. I ought not to be here and I am not bound to perform any duties for Potiphar. Rightfully I am a free man, as free as Potiphar, and I shall not work for him for nothing." No, the Lord was with him and, therefore, Joseph applied himself to that which lay next to hand and went to work with a will. No doubt he performed menial service in the house, at first, and then, by degrees, he rose to be the manager of the establishment. The truly godly man is ready for anything–he does not sigh for place, but accepts the state in which he is found–and does good in it, for the Lord's sake. The Lord was with Joseph, none the less, when he was cast into the prison. Joseph knew God was with him in prison and, therefore, he did not sit down sullenly in his sorrow, but he bestirred himself to make the best of his afflicted condition.

Since the Lord was with him there, he was comforted. It would be infinitely better to be in prison with God than on the throne of

Pharaoh without God! He did not mourn and moan and spend his time in writing petitions to Potiphar, or making appeals to Potiphar. He set himself to be of service to his fellow prisoners and the wardens and very soon he was at the front, again, for, "The Lord was with him." When he came to be exalted and Pharaoh made him ruler over Egypt, notice what he did! He did not strut about, or take his case to court. He did not stop to enjoy his honors in peace and leave others to do the business, but he set to his work, personally and at once! Read Genesis 41:45–"And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt."

Then read the next verse–"And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went throughout all the land of Egypt." No sooner did he get the office than he gave himself to the execution of it, personally inspecting the whole country! Many are so worn out by their toils in getting a position that they have no strength left for performing their duties. When they get a new position, their first consideration is how they shall spend the profits from it. Place-hunters seldom try to make themselves fit for the position, but crave the position whether they are fit for it or not! Many, when they get an office, are exceedingly skillful in showing how not to do it–they get into the office and pass on everything to the next clerk and he to the next, so that nothing is done! Procrastination is the very hinge of business and punctuality the

thief of time. They do as little as they can for the money, upon the theory that if you are too energetic your labors will be too cheap.

Joseph, however, was not of that sort, for no sooner was he made commissioner-general of Egypt, than he was up to his eyes in the task of building storehouses and gathering up grain to fill them. By his wonderful economic policy, he supplied the people in the time of famine and in the process, the power of Pharaoh was greatly strengthened. The Lord was with him–therefore he did not think of the honor to which he had been promoted, but of the responsibility which had been laid upon him–and he gave himself wholly to his great work. That is what you and I must do if we are to give practical proof that God is with us! But notice again, God was with Joseph and that made him tender and sympathetic. Some men who are prompt enough in business are rough, coarse, hard–but not Joseph! His tenderness distinguishes him. He is full of loving consideration.

When he had prisoners in his charge, he did not treat them roughly, but with much consideration. He watched their countenances, enquired into their troubles and was willing to do all in his power for them. This was one secret of his success in life–he was everybody's friend. He who is willing to be the servant of all, the same shall be the chief of all. God was with Joseph and taught him compassion, for God, Himself, is very pitiful and full of sympathy for the suffering. Perhaps you will object to this, that

Joseph seemed, for a while, to afflict and tantalize his brothers. By no means! He was seeking their good. The love he bore to them was wise and prudent. God, who is far more loving than Joseph, frequently afflicts us to bring us to repentance and to heal us of many evils. Joseph wished to bring his brothers into a right state of heart and he succeeded in it, though the process was more painful to him than to them!

At last he could not restrain himself, but burst into weeping before them all, for there was a big loving heart under the Egyptian garb of Joseph! He loved with all his soul and so will every man who has God with him, for "God is Love." If you do not love, God is not with you. If you go through the world selfish and morose, bitter, suspicious, bigoted, hard–the devil is with you! God is not for where God is He expands the spirit! He causes us to love all mankind with the love of benevolence and He makes us take a sweet complacency in the chosen brotherhood of Israel, so that we especially delight to do good to all those who are of the household of faith. This was a mark that God was with Joseph.

Another mark of God's Presence with Joseph was his great wisdom. He did everything as it ought to be done. You can scarcely alter anything in Joseph's life to improve it and I think if I admire his wisdom in one thing more than another it is in his wonderful silence. It is easy to talk, comparatively easy to talk well, but to be quiet is the difficulty! He never said a word, that I can learn, about

Potiphar's wife. It seemed necessary to his own defense, but he would not accuse the woman. He let judgment go by default and left her to her own conscience and her husband's cooler consideration. This showed great power. It is hard for a man to compress his lips, saying nothing, when his character is at stake. So eloquent was Joseph in his silence that there is not a word of complaint throughout the whole record of his life.

We cannot say that of all the Bible saints, for many of them complained bitterly! Indeed, we have whole books of lamentations! We do not condemn those who did complain, but we greatly admire those, who like sheep before the shearers, were dumb. The iron entered into his soul, but he does not tell us so–we look to the Psalms for that information. He bore in calm resignation all the great Father's will. When his brothers stood before him–the cruel men who sold him–he did not upbraid them. In fact, he comforted them, saying, "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me here: for God did send me before you to preserve life." Making sweet excuse for them, he said, "And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save yourselves by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me here, but God."

How different from the spirit of those people who pry about, seeking to discover faults, and when an imperfection is marked, they cry, "Look! Did you see that? I told you so! These good men

are no better than they should be." Yes, it may be true that there are spots in the sun, but there are greater spots in your eyes or you would see more of the Light of God! Those who see faults so readily have plenty of their own. Like the man who stole the goods and ran away, they try to turn the scent by calling, "Thief, thief," after others! May God make us blind to the faults of His people sooner than allow us to have a lynx eye for their flaws and an inventive faculty to ascribe ill motives to them! I wish we were as wisely silent as Joseph was. We may often repent of speech, but I think very seldom of silence. You may complain and be justified in the complaint, but you will have far more glory if you do not complain!

For what was there, after all, for Joseph to complain of, since the Lord was with him? He was in prison–that is something to complain of. Yes, but if the Lord was with him, the prison was no longer dreary! I would gladly go to prison any day if the Lord would be with me! Who would not? But Joseph was away from his beloved father and the trotting of those little feet that he loved so much to hear–the feet of little brother Benjamin. I am sure Joseph always missed his mother's only other son, his only full brother. It was a great grief to him to be away from home, but still, he was quiet, calm and happy. God is with him, if Benjamin is not! If father Jacob is away, God is present! And thus he finds no cause for

bitter lament, but much reason for accepting his lot and doing his best in each condition.

"God was with him" and this is the last evidence I give of it–that he was kept faithful to the Covenant, faithful to Israel and to Israel's God right through. Pharaoh gave him, in marriage, the daughter of a priest. And the priests were the highest class throughout Egypt–so Joseph was thus promoted to nobility by marriage, as well as to be at the head of all the nobility by office. They cried before him, "Bow the knee," and everyone honored him throughout all the land of Egypt. Yet he would not be an Egyptian–he was an Israelite, still, and his good old father, when he came down into Egypt, found him one of the family in heart and soul! His father's blessing was greatly prized by Joseph and he obtained it for himself and for his sons.

I notice with much pain that many professors who prosper in this world have not God with them, for they turn into Egyptians–they do not, now, care for the simple worship of God's people–they sigh for something more showy and more respectable! They need society and so they seek out a fashionable church and swallow their principles! They lay it all upon their children, for who can expect young ladies and gentlemen to attend an ordinary Meeting House where such low people go? For the sake of the young people, they are bound to mix with society, and so they leave their principles,

their people and their God! They become Egyptians! Indeed, some of them would become devil-worshippers to gain rank and status!

Off they go to Egypt, shoals of them! I have seen it and shall see it again. If some of you get rich, I dare say you will do the same–it seems to be the way of men–as soon as a professor prospers in the world, he is ashamed of the Truth of God he once loved. Such apostates will find it heavy work to die! Verily, I say unto you, instead of their being ashamed of us, we have good reason to be ashamed of them, for it is to their disgrace that they cannot be content to associate with God's chosen because they happen to be poor and, perhaps, illiterate! Joseph stuck to his people and to their God–though he must live in Egypt, he will not be an Egyptian! He will not even leave his dead body to lie in an Egyptian pyramid! The Egyptians built a very costly tomb for Joseph–it stands to this day, but his body is not there. "I charge you," he said, "take my bones with you, for I do not belong to Egypt. My place is in the land of promise." "He gave commandment concerning his bones."

Let others do as they will, as for me, my lot is cast with those who follow the Lord fully. Yes, my Lord, where you dwell, I will dwell. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God, and may my children be your children to the last generation. If the Lord is with you, that is what you will say, but if He is not with you and you prosper in the world, and increase in riches, you will turn your

back on Christ and His people–and we shall have to say, as Paul did, “Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world.”

III. Thirdly, let us observe THE RESULT OF GOD’S BEING WITH JOSEPH. The result was that, “He was a prosperous man.” But notice that although the Lord was with Joseph, it did not screen him from hatred, “The Lord was with him, but his brothers hated him. "Yes, and if the Lord loves a man, the world will spite him. We know that we are God’s children because the adversaries of God are our adversaries! Furthermore, "The Lord was with Joseph,” but it did not screen him from temptation of the worst kind–it did not prevent his master’s wife casting her wicked eyes upon him. The best of men may be tempted to the worst of crimes.

The Presence of God did not screen him from slander–the base woman accused him of outrageous wickedness and God permitted Potiphar to believe her. You and I would have said, “If the Lord is with us, how can this evil happen to us?” Ah, but the Lord was with him and yet he was a slandered man! No, the Divine Presence did not screen him from pain, either. He sat in prison wearing fetters till the iron entered into his soul and yet, “The Lord was with him.” That Presence did not save him from disappointment. He said to the butler, “Think of me when it is well with you.” But the butler forgot him altogether! Everything may seem to go against you and yet, God may be with you. The Lord does not promise you that you

shall have what looks like prosperity, but you shall have what is real prosperity in the best sense.

Now, what did God's being with Joseph do for him? First, it saved him from gross sin. He flees, he shuts his ears–he flees and conquers–for God is with him! O young Friend, if God is with you in the hour of temptation, you will need no better, no grander result than to remain perfectly pure with garments unspotted by the flesh! God was with him and the next result was it enabled him to act grandly. Wherever he is, he does the right thing and does it splendidly. If he is a slave, his master finds that he never had such a servant! If he is in prison, those dungeons were never charmed by the presence of such a ministering angel! If he is exalted to be with Pharaoh, Pharaoh never had such a Chancellor of the finances of Egypt–never were Egyptian finance so prosperous!

In such a manner did God help Joseph that he was enabled to fulfill a glorious destiny, for if Noah was the world's second father, what shall we say of Joseph, but that he was its foster nurse? The human race had died of famine if Joseph's foresight had not laid by, in store, the produce of the seven plenteous years, for there was a famine over all lands! The wisdom of Joseph nourished all mankind! It was no mean position for the young Hebrew to occupy–to be manager of the commissariat of the whole known world! If God is with us, we shall fulfill a noble destiny, too. It may not be so widely known, so visible to human eye, but life is always

ennobled by the Presence of God! Also it gave Joseph a very happy life, for taking the life of Joseph, all through, it is an enviable one. Nobody would think of putting him down among the miserable. If we had to make a selection of unhappy men, we certainly should not think of Joseph! No, it was a great life and a happy life–and such will yours be if God is with you.

And, to finish, God gave Joseph and his family a double portion in Israel, which never happened to any other of the 12 sons of Jacob. Jacob said, "And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto you in the land of Egypt before I came unto you into Egypt are mine; as Reuben and Simeon they shall be mine," thus making each of them into a tribe. Ephraim and Manasseh each stood at the head of a tribe as if they had been actually sons of Jacob! Levi is taken out of the 12 and provision is made for the Levites as servants of God. And then Ephraim and Manasseh are put in, so that Joseph's house figures twice among the twelve! There are two Josephs in Israel but only one Judah! Joseph has a double portion of the kingdom!

Those who begin early with God, stand fast to the end and hold to God both in trouble and prosperity, shall see their children brought to the Lord–and in their children they shall possess the double–yes, the Lord shall render unto them double for all they may lose in honor for His name's sake. It may be they shall live to see the hand of the Lord upon their children and their children's children! And to

them shall be fulfilled the Word of God, “In you shall Israel bless, saying, God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh.” Let us seek after a double part with God’s people by keeping heartily with them. Who is willing to suffer with them that he may reign with them? Who is willing to cast the riches of Egypt behind his back that he may have a double portion in the promised land, the land flowing with milk and honey?

I think I hear some of you say, “Here I am, Sir. I shall be glad enough to share with God’s people, be it what it may.” Carry Christ’s Cross and you shall wear Christ’s crown! Go with Him through the mire and through the slough and you shall be with Him in the palaces of Glory! You shall share a double portion with Him in the day of His appearing. This can only be because the Lord is with you–that must be the beginning and end of it! “The Lord was with Joseph”–O Lord, be with us! O You, whose name is Emmanuel, God With Us, be with us from now on and forever! Amen and Amen!

Ge 41:9 • Have You Forgotten Him?

SERMON 0680

H*ave You Forgotten Him?*

"I do remember my faults this day."

Genesis 41:9

Our memory is like theirs, only in proportion as it is developed this peculiarity is more manifest. We have a most convenient warehouse for storing the merchandise of evil, but the priceless jewels of goodness are readily stolen from their case. We have a fireproof safe for worthless matters, and enclose the rarest gems in mere pasteboard cases. Our memory, like a strainer, often suffers the good wine to pass through but retains all the dregs. It holds the bad in an iron grasp and plays with good till it slips through the fingers. Our memories, like ourselves, have done the things which

they ought not to have done, and have left undone the things which they ought to have done–and there is no health in them.

Among other things, it is not always easy to remember our faults. We have special and particular reasons for not wishing to be too often reminded of them. Few men care to keep their faults in the front room of the house. Underground, in the darkest cellar, and, if possible with the door locked and the key lost–it is there we would like to conceal our faults from ourselves. If, however, the Grace of God has entered into a man he will pray that he may remember his faults and he will ask Divine Grace that if he should forget any excellences which he once supposed he had, he may not forget his defects, his sins, his infirmities and his transgressions. He would have them constantly before himthat he may be humbled by them and led to seek pardon for them and help to overcome them.

I do not say that the butler in this case had any work of Divine Grace in his heart, but I shall use him as an illustration and hope by using my watchman's rattle, to wake up some of your sleepy memories, for there are thieves about, and you are being robbed without knowing it! It will be a healthy result to us all if we shall be compelled to say at the end of this sermon, "I do remember my faults this day."

In the first place this morning, using the butler as our illustration, we shall state his faults. Secondly, we shall consider the

circumstances which refreshed his memory. And, thirdly we shall show the good points in his remembrance.

We shall first call your attention to the BUTLER'S FAULTS, for his faults are ours, only ours are on a larger scale. "I do remember my faults this day." His particular fault was that he had forgotten Joseph–having promised to remember him when it should be well with him–he had altogether overlooked the circumstances which occurred in the prison. Instead he had been enjoying himself and leaving his friend to pine in obscurity.

Here, then, is the first fault–the butler had forgotten a friend. That is never a thing to be said to a man's praise. We ought to write the deeds of friendship as much as possible in marble–and that man is unworthy of esteem who can readily forget favors received. Joseph had done all that he could to make the butler's sojourn in prison comfortable. It was hard, that so soon as the butler had escaped from prison his friend Joseph had escaped his memory. Save us from men who can so easily forget!

But you and I have a Friend! We call Him very dear. We are accustomed to speak of Him in very rapturous terms. We declare that no others have such a Friend as we have. We have made our boast that there is none other that deserves the name in comparison with Him whom we call our best Beloved. And yet how many of us have forgotten Him?! His name blessed self–alas, how cold our love to Him! This fault will not strike the carnal mind as being a

great one, but in proportion as our hearts are spiritual and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we shall feel it a great and grievous sin to have in any measure forgotten our best Friend.

The circumstances were these–the butler was in prison, and then this friend came to him and spoke comfortably to him. Do you remember when you were in prison? I never can forget when I was bound in fetters far harder, heavier, and more painful to wear than fetters of iron. It was a dark dungeon, without a ray of light. There was no rest in it neither night nor day. A certain fearful looking for judgment and of fiery indignation haunted that gloomy cell. I struggled to be free, but the more I struggled the more hard did my bondage become. I was as one in the deep mire, who, byevery struggle only sinks himself the more hopelessly in it.

Do you not remember? Oh, Believers, you have passed through the same experience! Your feet were in the stocks, you laid in the innermost prison while the whip of the Law frequently fell upon your backs. The sentence of execution thundered in your ears and you trembled lest you should be dragged forth to your doom! Do you not remember it, the wormwood and the gall? Joseph came to the butler and said, “Why do you look so sadly today?” In our case we have not forgotten how Jesus came to us and enquired into our state. With what tender accents of sympathy did He address our hearts!

He told us–and we could readily believe it–that He would not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed. We had not been accustomed to be addressed in this fashion, for the voice of Moses is far from musical, and his tones are very grating to the ear. But when Jesus spoke it was all soft and sweet. “Poor Sinner!” He said, as though He pitied rather than blamed. He looked upon us not with an eye searching for iniquity, but with a heart which saw our calamity and which looked for the means to deliver us! Have you forgotten those times of brokenness of spirit when the only comfort which you knew was the name of Jesus? When the only stay for the hunger and thirst which were in your spirits was a morsel or two of His sweet love which He graciously cast to you to keep you by the way?

Do you remember your dream? The butler had a dream. Do you remember yours? It was more than a night dream–it was a day dream with a terrible interpretation appended to it in your mind. You dreamed of a vine, too, and you were the cluster, and you dreamed of the time when you should be cast into the winepress, and trod beneath the feet of almighty Wrath until your blood should fill the cup of Divine vengeance even to the brim! Do you remember that dream? How it haunted you, and seemed like some huge bird of prey with black wings and horrid cries, fluttering over you as though about to tear you in pieces?

I remember when day was night to me, and night was worse than night. “Then You scare me with dreams, and terrify me through visions,” was the cry of Job, and such has been the lament of many and many a heart under the weight of sin. Oh, how guilt can thunder in our ears! How the Word of God can grow terrible and stern! “God is angry with you! God is angry with the wicked every day! It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment.” In our terror we could see the rider on the pale horse and feel ourselves overtaken by him and struck down by the horses' hoofs! We saw ourselves cast into the pit of Hell and seemed to be falling, falling, falling, ever sinking from the angry glance of God and still as dreadfully near to it as before! That was our dream, and the interpretation, the only interpretation whichseemed to fit it was this, “You will be banished from His Presence into eternal misery.”

Beloved, do you remember when Jesus came with the interpretation of a very different kind, just as Joseph did to the butler? He interpreted to the butler that Pharaoh would lift him up and put him in his place again. And so Jesus came to us and told us that we were condemned in ourselves but that we might not be condemned at the last. He told us that we had a sentence of death in ourselves because God intended never to pass that sentence in the Court of Heaven and had, instead, passed it in the Court of our conscience.

He told us that God never kills with His Law in the heart without intending to make alive! That when He wounds He heals! That when He strips He means to clothe. We did not understand this. We thought that all this terrible dealing within our heart was the prelude of everlasting judgment! But He showed us that as many as God loves He rebukes and chastens. That it is the way with Him to break up the clods with the plow before He casts in the golden seed–and to dig out deep foundations before He piles polished stones one upon another to make a temple to His praise. Ah, I never shall forget when, at the foot of the Cross, I saw the interpretation of all my inward griefs when I looked up and saw the flowing of my Savior's precious blood–and had the great riddle all solved. My Brothers and Sisters, what a discovery was that when we learned the secret that we were to be saved not by whatwe were or were to be, but saved by what Christ had done for us! The simplicity of the Cross is the grandest of all revelations. "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." Why it is as simple as the interpretation which Joseph gave to the dream! But in its simplicity lies a great part of its sweetness. How was it that I was such a fool as not to understand it before–that for every sinner who was truly a sinner, and had no righteousness of his own– Jesus Christ is made righteousness and salvation? And that every sinner who confesses with a broken heart that he deserves God's wrath, he may know that Jesus has suffered all God's wrath for him, and that therefore

God is no longer angry with him–for all His anger has been spent upon the Person of Jesus Christ?!

How sweet it is to understand that all our soul's terrors and alarms are only meant to bring us to the Cross! That they are not intended to make us look at ourselves, to search for comfort there–nor intended to set us upon paving a way to Heaven by our own exertions–but to lead us to Jesus! Happy day! We see Jesus as the cluster crushed until the heart's blood flows and can, by faith, go in unto the King, with Jesus Christ's own precious blood and offer that, just as the butler stood before Pharaoh with the wine cup in his hand. I bear a cup filled not with my blood but His blood! Not the blood from me as a cluster of the vine of earth, but the blood of Jesus as a cluster of Heaven's own vintage, pouring out its precious floods to make glad the heart of God and man. Here lies our fault–that we have forgotten all this–not forgotten the fact, but forgotten to love Him who gave us that soul-comforting, heart-cheering interpretation!

Beloved, when Jesus revealed Himself at first, our hearts were ready to leap out of our bodies for joy! Do you remember the time you thought you could sing always and never stop? Nothing was too hard, no burden was too heavy for you then–for your soul was all on fire with love. But ah, since then, what a sad declension! You forgot your Joseph. You forgot your Friend who gave you this kind interpretation of your dream!

Dear Friends, there was something which ought to have made the butler remember Joseph. When I read the story just now, it came very vividly to my own mind. It was this–that there was another in prison at the same time with him–and what had become of him? The baker had been hanged! And if the butler had chosen to walk out, he might have seen the relics of the body of his poor miserable companion–gibbeted to be fed upon by kites and carrion crows. That poor wretch had dreamed a dream, too, but the interpretation had been very different.

When some of us look back to the time when we were in sin with others, and recollect that although we are here, the living, to praise the Redeemer's name, some of our old companions are–we shudder to think of it, but it is so–at this moment in Hell! How shall we praise the electing Grace which has made us to differ? It is a solemn thought that such differences should occur–

"Why were we made to hear His voice,
And enter while there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"

Some of you used to spend hour after hour in the public house, and you could blaspheme God's name. And while those whom you once drank with are now drinking the cup of God's wrath, you, who were not one whit better than they–in some points even worse–are now saved by Sovereign Grace.

Discriminating Grace should always give a high tone to our gratitude. He has not dealt thus with every people. Praise the Lord! If you whom God has chosen, and whom Christ has specially and effectually called by Divine Grace from among others–if you do not remember Him, what shall I say to you? Oh, dear Friends, how it should humble you and bow you down in the dust that after such remarkable, peculiar, distinguishing love as that of which you have been the subjects, you should still forget your dear Friend, and fail in point of duty where you ought to have been faithful to Him!

We have not, however, quite done with the case of the butler and Joseph. The request which Joseph made of the butler was a very natural one. He said, "Think of me when it is well with you." He asked no hard, difficult, exacting favor, but simply, "Think of me, and speak to Pharaoh. You will have his ear in moments when kings are most likely to be in good humor. You will wait upon him at his feasts–then, when it is well with you and the time is come–put in a word for your poor friend who will be pining away in the damps of the dungeon." It was a very simple thing, and I will be bound to say the butler said to him, "Oh, my dear fellow, I will not only do that, but I do not know what I will not do for you! You shall be out of prison within a week and I will take good care that you have the fat of all the land of Egypt,

But he did nothing of the kind. What the Savior asks of us, His servants, is most natural and most simple, and quite as much for

our good as it is for His Glory. Among other things, He has said to all of you who love Him, “This do in remembrance of Me.” He has asked you to gather around His table, and break bread with His servants, and feast with Him. Some of you have never obeyed His command yet–you say you love Him–but you forget Him. It was kind of Him to institute that blessed ordinance to help your memory.

It is doubly unkind of you that you not only forget Him but are not willing to use the means to have that frail memory of yours refreshed. Moreover, of you who come to His Table He asks the favor to speak a good word for Him wherever you have an opportunity. During the last week have you spoken for Jesus? He asks you to spread abroad the savor of His name–have you done so during the last month or not? He requests of you that as you are an heir with Him and a partaker of His kingdom, you will help Him to spread it–not by word of mouth only–but by your gifts and by your labors. What have you done?

Suppose that now the Lord Jesus Christ should occupy this pulpit instead of me, and stand here and spread His hands and show you His wounds? Could you dare to look at Him? Might not some of you have crimsoned cheeks as you would have to confess, “Ah, Master, we have forgotten You. As to much practical service and honor of Your name, we have been quite as negligent as the butler was concerning Joseph.” Well, He is here in spirit, and He will

soon be here in Person. Servants of the Master, be faithful to your Master! But oh, all you who lean upon His bosom, and have familiar union with Him–I will not merely speak of faithfulness to you, but I charge you by your love, by the lilies, and by the animals of the field–see to it that you not forget your Beloved! Day by day, and hour by hour, feast Him with your wine, with your milk, with the choicest of your gifts, and the richest products of your souls! Labor for Him, live for Him, and be ready to die for Him who has done so much for you!

I have thus stated the butler's case, but I shall want to pause a minute or two over this head just to go into the reason of his fault. Why was it that he did not remember Joseph? There is always a reason for everything, if we but try to find it out. He must have been swayed by one of three reasons. Perhaps the butler was naturally ungrateful. We do not know, but that may have been the case. He may have been a person who could receive unbounded favors without a due sense of obligation. I trust that is not our case in the fullest and most unmitigated sense–but I am afraid we must all plead guilty in a measure. Were there ever such ungrateful ones as the saints of God? We treat no other friend so badly as we treat our Lord!

We love our parents. We feel gratitude towards friends who have assisted us in times of need. We are bound by very strong ties to certain persons who were very greatly an assistance to us in a

pinch. But our dear Savior–better than father and mother, fonder than the fondest friend, closer than the most loving spouse–how ill we use Him! I am afraid, Brethren, we had better all of us say it is ingratitude here–we are basely ungrateful to Him. But let us not confess it as a matter of course–let us be ashamed to have such a thing to say! Let us feel that it lowers us more than anything else could lower us–that it proves how total, how abject, how degrading must have been the Fall of Adam, that even the love of Jesus Christ shed abroad in hearts like ours in such a remarkable and plenteous manner cannot cure us of the base and detestable vice of ingratitude!

Oh You dear One, can I look upon Your face, all covered with Your bloody sweat? Can I view You again all covered with the spittle from the mouths of Your enemies? Can I see You in Your thirst and anguish on the Cross and know that every pang was for me, and every woe for me–and not a groan or spasm of pain for Yourself, but all for love of me who was Your enemy–and can I, after that, forget You? Oh my Soul, loathe yourself that you should be ungrateful to Him!

Perhaps, however, worldly care choked the memory. The chief butler had a great deal to do–he had many underservants, and having to wait in a palace much care was required. He who serves a despot like the king of Egypt must be very particular in his service. It is very possible that the butler was so busy with his work and his

gains, and looking after his fellow servants and all that, that he forgot poor Joseph. Is it not very possible that this may be the case with us? We forget the Lord Jesus to whom we are bound by such ties because our business is so large, our family so numerous, our cares so pressing, our bills and bonds so urgent–and even, perhaps, our gains are so large!

There is as much power to divide the heart from Christ in gain as there is in loss. In fact, the sharpest edge of the world's sword is prosperity. The back cut of adversity very seldom wounds as prosperity does. And yet, dear Friends, what are all these cares that they should make us forget our Lord? I know not to what to compare us. Unto what shall I compare our folly? We are like children in the marketplace who have their little plays and games, their pieces of broken crock and stick and stone and these take up all their thoughts. And they forget their dear mother who is calling them. She has nourished these children, and day by day her heart cares for them, but they forget her.

They cannot live without her–they must go to her for all their necessities–the very garments on their backs are her workmanship, and the food that keeps life in their bodies she must find. But they are too busy, too busy with these little plays and toys and mere dirt and such things as children in the market will play with–too busy to think of her. Oh, it is base that it should be so, but we are sadly worldly. I am afraid John Bunyan's picture of the man with the

muck-rake is not altogether unlike some of God's own children. Here we are with the rake groping over the dunghill, although above us stands the angel with the golden crown calling to us to look up from the dunghill and remember our lasting and enduring portion! But no, not we–that dunghill takes up so much of our time and thoughts that the crown is forgotten!

Do not misunderstand me, I would not have you be negligent in business–neither reason nor Revelation require that–but oh, if you could remember the Savior in it all, and if you traded for His sake and worked for Him, and in the ordinary deeds of life did all as unto the Lord ("whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus")–then, truly, everything might remind you of Him and both gain and loss, mercy and misery might only drive you nearer to His blessed bosom!

I am half ashamed to have to say one thing more. I am afraid that the butler forgot Joseph out of pride because he had grown to be such a great man and Joseph was in prison. He was butler to the king. Now when he was in prison Joseph was his equal, and in some sense his superior for he waited on him. But now my lord, the butler, has great interest at court and he wears splendid garments, and he is very great among his fellow servants. Joseph–Joseph smells of the dungeon! He is a jailbird, and quite beneath him. He knows not what Joseph is to become–that all the glories of the land of Egypt are to be at Joseph's feet–but he is ashamed of Joseph.

I do not suppose this operates with many of you, but I have known it with some professed Believers. When they were little in Israel, when they first professed to have found peace, oh, how they acknowledged Jesus! But they got on in the world and prospered–and then they could not worship among those poor people who were good enough for them once–they now drive to a more fashionable place of worship where the Lord Jesus is seldom heard of. They feel themselves bound to get into a higher class of society, as they call it, and the poor despised cause of Jesus is beneath them, forgetting, as they foolishly do, that the day will come when Christ's cause shall be uppermost!

They forget that the world shall go down and the faithful followers of the Lord Jesus shall be peers and princes even in this world, and reign with Him–He being King of kings and Lord of lords–and they sitting upon His Throne and sharing in His royal dignity. I hope none of you have forgotten Christ because of that. I do not know, though–I have my fears of some of you. I do know this, that many a working man thinks more of Christ while he is so than he does when he rises above his fellows. We have heard of one who used to give much when he was poor, but when he grew rich he gave less, and he said, "when I had a shilling purse I had a guinea heart, and wished I could do much more for Christ. But now I have a guinea purse I find I have only a shilling heart, and I am for stinting and doing less."

Oh let it not be so! Shall it be that the more He gives the less we give, and the more He shows his love, the less we show our love? God forbid that we should do this, but by every tie of gratitude let us serve Him more and more each day! There was very great heinousness in this forgetfulness on the part of the butler and he ought to have felt it. Perhaps the way for us to see our own fault is this. Suppose the butler had put himself in Joseph's place and said, "Now I wonder what Joseph thinks of my conduct? Suppose I were Joseph in prison, and I had done this favor to someone else? How should I feel with regard to his forgetfulness?"

My dear Friends, can you suppose yourselves in Jesus Christ's place? Suppose it possible that you could have died for another, and by your death could have saved him and made him the partaker of everlasting joys? What would you think of him if he treated you as you treat Jesus Christ? You would say, "I am ashamed of him. I regret that ever I spent so much love on such a thankless person." Judge, then–judge your own case! Again, he might have judged of the heinousness of his forgetfulness by considering his conduct as he would have considered it at the first. Suppose a prophet had told you, when you were first converted, that you would live as you have done? Could you have believed it? You would have said "Never! If the Lord Jesus Christ does but take my burden off my back and set me free, there is nothing which I will not do for Him. I will be none of your cold, dead professors, not I."

But you have been, dear Friends! You have been just as lukewarm as others. Judge of your sin as you would have judged of it at the first. Again, will you please to judge of it as you judge of other people? What do you think of other cold hearts? What do you think of other chilly professors, whose lives are lukewarm, and whose love knows no fervency? Judge yourselves by the same judgment. Put your spirit in the same scale and be humbled! Yes, let every one of us lay his mouth in the dust as we confess this day that we are verily guilty concerning the Lord Jesus. Let us all remember our faults this day.

II. The second point is this–WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES BROUGHT THE FAULT TO THE BUTLER'S MIND? The same circumstances which surround us this morning. First, he met with a person in the same condition as that in which he once was. King Pharaoh had dreamed a dream and wished for an interpretation. Joseph could interpret–and the butler remembered his fault.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, there are those in the world who are in the same state of mind as you were once in. They once loved sin and hated God and were strangers and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. But in some of them there has been the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit and they have dreamed a dream. They are awakened, although not yet enlightened. Salvation is a riddle to them at present, and they want the interpretation. Do you not remember how the Gospel was blessed to you? Do you not

desire to send it to others? If you cannot preach yourself, will you not help me in my life-work of training others to preach Jesus?

If I could bring before you this morning a score or two of anxious persons up from country villages and remote parts of our own land, you would say, “Oh, let me tell them about the Savior, or let me help to send someone to them who will do so.” That is just the effect I want to produce without using that means. I want to make you remember your Lord Jesus–practically remember Him–by reminding you that there are persons who are now seeking Him, who are now panting after Him who have not yet heard the Gospel! They are longing for some herald of peace to come to them and proclaim the good news. By the love of souls, aid me in my great anxiety to supply the needs of the age with a ministry called of God to preach His Truth.

The next thing that recalled the butler’s thought was this–he saw that many means had been used to interpret Pharaoh’s dream, but they had all failed. We read that Pharaoh sent for his wise men but they could not interpret his dream. You are in a similar case. There are thousands in England who are trying to minister to spiritual necessities–above all we have Popery in its double form–Romish and Anglican–doing its best to interpret the dream of the human heart. You know what a sad mess it makes of it–it gives a stone instead of bread–brings to poor, needy, guilty man, anything but the Savior he wants.

Now, as you hear these foolish wise men all blundering over the dream, do you not think of the Joseph who could interpret it? And as you hear these men holding up baptismal regeneration and sacramental salvation, does not your tongue long to say, "O fools! O generation of simpletons! It is Christ Jesus who is the great Interpreter–He alone can supply human necessities." Do you not feel a need, if you cannot go and preach yourselves, to help others to do so? Will you remember Jesus Christ as you remember how many are perverting the Gospel and preaching anything rather than the merit of His Cross? Remember your Lord today and your faults concerning Him, but let your remembrance lead to future diligence in His cause.

Then, again, if the butler could have known it, he had other motives for remembering Joseph. It was through Joseph that the whole land of Egypt was blessed. Joseph comes out of prison, interprets the dream which God had given to the head of the State, and that interpretation preserved all Egypt, yes, and all other nations during seven years of drought! Only Joseph could do it. Oh Brothers and Sisters, you know that it is only Jesus who is the balm of Gilead for the wounds of this poor dying world! You know that there is nothing which can bless our land, and all other lands, like the Cross of Jesus Christ! Have you forgotten your Savior? Have you allowed His Gospel to be by without preaching it yourselves or helping others to preach it? Have you suffered the precious Truth of

God to be like Joseph, hidden in prison, when you might have helped to bring it out into open court that others might hear and know the sound which has made glad your own heart? Then, as you remember England, the country of your love. As you remember other lands, which in proportion are dear to you, will you not think of Jesus today and do something for the promotion of His cause?

Once more, surely the butler would have remembered Joseph had he known to what an exaltation Joseph would be brought. Under God it was all through the butler saying, “I remember Joseph,” that Joseph came out of prison, that he stood before Pharaoh, that he rode in the second chariot, that the heralds cried before him, “Bow the knee!” and that Joseph, the poor prisoner, became governor over the land of Egypt! Christian, would you like to lift up the name of Jesus from obscurity into the throne of the human heart?

At this present moment throughout this world Jesus Christ is still the despised and rejected of men! He is still a root out of a dry ground to the mass of mankind, and the only way in which He can be exalted is by loving hearts telling of Him and helping others to tell of Him. Think of the splendor which yet will surround our Lord Jesus! He shall come, Beloved, He shall come in the chariots of salvation! The day draws near when all things shall be put under Him. Kings shall yield their crowns to His superior sway and whole sheaves of scepters, plucked from tyrants' hands, shall be gathered beneath His arms–

"Look, you saints, the sight is glorious,
See the 'Man of Sorrows' now?
From the fight returned victorious,
Every knee to Him shall bow."

You by testifying of Him are promoting the extension of His kingdom and doing the best that lies in you to gather together the scattered who are to be the jewels of His crown. Surely the thought of His exaltation fires you with delight! The prospect of magnifying Him, of setting Him on high and helping to adorn His head–or even to strew the path beneath His feet–must fill your soul with a celestial ardor! Do not forget Him, then, but let the fact that you are in this position today–that you can glorify Jesus, that you can bless the world–let this encourage you to remember your faults this day.

III. In the last place, I have a few things to say by way of COMMENDATION OF THE BUTLER'S REMEMBRANCE. It is a pity he forgot Joseph, but it is a great blessing that he did not always forget him. It is a sad thing that you and I should have done so little–it is a mercy that there is time left for us to do more!

One of our dear friends said this morning–one of our beloved deacons–when I was asking him about some of the Churches he has been to visit–places where we are forming new Churches–what he thought of the work which was going on. "Oh," he said, "it is such a glorious work, and God is so marvelous in it that I wish I were

younger that I might live to see more of it." He is not old, but he wished he were much younger that he might see God's gracious work going on for many years as it is now progressing through God's Grace in our midst. Our College is a mighty lever with which the Lord is working and if God's people knew more of it they would help it more.

I like the butler's remembrance, first of all, because it was very humbling to him. He had to say it to Pharaoh. Pharaoh was angry and put his servant in prison. That was not a very pleasant thing for the butler to say to the king, "My Lord, you were angry with me and put me in prison." But though it was a humbling thing, it was very necessary that he should say it and be reminded of it. Let us go before God with the confession, "Lord, I was as base and vile as any. Your Cross saved me. I was an heir of wrath even as others. Jesus did all this for me, blessed be His name, and I humble myself to think that I should so treacherously have forgotten Him who was so kind to me." I commend his remembrance for another thing, namely, that it was so personal. "I do remember my faults this day."What capital memories we have for treasuring up other people's faults, for once, let us keep to ourselves. Let the confession begin with the minister. "I do remember my faults this day." This is not the place for me to tell you of them, though I dare say you see them without any telling of mine, but I do remember them. They make a long list. My Brethren in office–the deacons

and elders–I have no charge against them, but I have no doubt they can all say, “I do remember my faults this day.”

You members of this Church, some old and gray, some young beginners, many of you parents and people in middle life–I suppose there is not one of you but what might say–“Yes, I do remember my faults this day.” Let it go round. Do not let there be an exception to the case–let each Christian, instead of thinking about others, make it a personal matter, “I do remember my faults this day.” I could wish that the unconverted here would join with us. Your fault–the great fault with you–is that you do not believe in Jesus Christ. You do not trust Him with your souls, but are still strangers to Him. I wish you could say, now, you up in that gallery there, each one of you, “I do remember my faults this day.” And the whole body of you down below the stairs, and you around the pulpit, “I do remember my faults this day.” It is a good sign of true repentance when it is personal repentance. Every man must mourn apart, and every womanday.“ The best part of it, perhaps, was the practical nature of the confession. The moment he remembered his fault, he redressed it as far as he could. He could not make up to his poor friend for the days he had been lying in prison, but he spoke to Pharaoh directly. That action was the means of bringing Joseph out.

Now, dear Friends, if you remember your faults to the Lord Jesus, may you have Grace not to fall into them again! If you have not spoken for Him, speak today! If you have not given to His cause,

give now! If you have not devoted yourselves as you ought to have done to the promotion of His kingdom, do it now! Oh, Sinner, if you have not believed in Christ, may God the Holy Spirit lead you to believe now! It is of no use remembering a debt if you do not pay it. And it is of no avail to remember a fault if you do not repent of it.

I have little by way of urging you as a congregation to do more in the service of the Master. Often I feel held back by the thought that you are doing so much, but oh, if we could do as much as possible, if every one of us felt pledged, for the Lord's cause and the Redeemer's kingdom, that there should be nothing within the range of possibility to mortal man that we would not attempt for such a King, for such a Lord, oh, then we should see blessed days!! You have had a zealous spirit. You still have it–but you need still more of it, and may God send it to you!

We are helping to send the Gospel throughout all this country, and to different countries abroad as well. Do not hold back when God is blessing! Your parts help is still required–be not slow to render it. Do come forward with us and help us to magnify the Savior's name till the ends of the earth shall know it, and all nations shall call Him blessed! The Lord bless these words for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Ge 42:1 • Corn in Egypt

SERMON 0234

Corn In Egypt

"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do you look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt. Get down there and buy for us from there, that we may live and not die."

Genesis 42:1, 2

GOD in His wisdom has so made the outward world that it is a strange and wonderful picture of the inner world. Nature has an analogy with Grace. The wonders that God does in the heart of man–each of them finds a parallel, a picture, a metaphor, an illustration–in the wonders which God performs in Providence. It is the duty of the minister always to look for these analogies. Our

Savior did so. He is the model preacher–His preaching was made up of parables, pictures from the outer world, accommodated to teach great and mighty Truths of God. And so is man's mind constituted that we can always see a thing better through a picture than anywhere else. If you tell a man a simple Truth of God, he does not see it nearly so well as if you told it to him in an illustration. If I should attempt to describe the flight of a soul from sin to Christ, you would not see it one half so readily as if I should picture John Bunyan's pilgrim running out of the city of destruction, with his fingers in his ears and hastening with all his might to the wicket gate.

There is something tangible in a picture, a something which our poor flesh and blood can lay hold of. And therefore the mind, grasping through the flesh and the blood, is able to understand the idea and to appropriate it. Hence the necessity and usefulness of the minister always endeavoring to illustrate his sermon and to make his discourse, as much as possible like the parables of Jesus Christ.

Now, there are very few minds that can make parables. The fact is, I do not know of but one good allegory in the English language and that is the "Pilgrim's Progress in Parables." Pictures and analogies are not so easy as some think–most men can understand them, but few can create them. Happy for us who are ministers of Christ–we have no great trouble about this matter. We have not to make parables. They are made for us. I believe that Old Testament

history has for one of its designs the furnishing of the Christian minister with illustrations. So that a Truth of God which I find in the New Testament in its naked form taught me as a doctrine, I find in the Old Testament cast into a parable. And so would we use this most excellent ancient book, the Old Testament, as an illustration of the New and as a means of explaining to our minds the Truth of God that is taught to us in a more doctrinal form in the New Testament.

What, then, do we see in these two verses of the forty-second chapter of Genesis? We have here a picture of man's lost estate, he is in a sore soul-devouring famine. We discover here man's hope. His hope lies in that Joseph, whom he knows not, has gone before him and provided all things necessary, that his wants may be supplied. And we have here practical advice, which was preeminently wise on the part of Jacob to his sons in his case and which, being interpreted, is also the wisest advice to you and to me. Seeing that there is mercy for sinners and that Jesus our brother has gone before us to provide for us an all-sufficient redemption–"why sit we here and look one upon another?" There is mercy in the breast of God, there is salvation in Christ–"get down there and buy for us from there, that we may live and not die."

Three things, then, this morning–first, a pitiful plight. Secondly, good news. And thirdly, excellent advice.

First, A PITIFUL PLIGHT. These sons of Jacob were overtaken by a famine. We may talk of famines, friends, but none of us know what they are. We have heard of a famine in Ireland and some dreadful stories have been related to us that have harrowed our hearts and almost made our hair stand up on end. But even there the full fury of famine was not known. We have heard, too, to our great grief, that there are still in this city, dark and hideous spots where men and women are absolutely perishing from hunger, who have sold from off their backs the last rags that covered them and are now unable to leave the house–and positively perishing of famine.

Such cases we have seen in our daily journals and our hearts have been sick to think that such things should now occur. But we cannot any of us guess what is the terror of an universal famine, when all men are poor because all men lack bread, when gold and silver are as valueless as the stones of the street, because mountains of silver and gold would scarce suffice to buy a single sheaf of wheat. Read the history of the famine of Samaria and see the dreadful shifts to which women were driven, when they did even eat their own offspring. Famines are hells on earth. The famine which had overtaken Jacob was one which, if it had not at the moment of which this passage speaks, exactly arrived at that dreadful pitch, was sure to come to it. For the famine was to last for seven years. And if, through the spendthrift character of Eastern

nations, they had not saved in the seven years of plenty enough even for one year, what would become of them during the sixth or seventh year of famine?

This was the state of Jacob's family. They were cast into a waste, a howling wilderness of famine with but one oasis and that oasis they did not hear of till just at the time to which our text refers, when they learned to their joy that there was corn in Egypt. Permit me now to illustrate the condition of the sinner by the position of these sons of Jacob.

First, the sons of Jacob had a very great need of bread. There was a family of sixty-six of them. We are apt, when we read these names of the sons of Jacob, to think they were all lads. Are you aware, that Benjamin, the youngest of them, was the father of ten children at the time he went into Egypt? So he was not so very small a lad at any rate and all the rest had large families, so that there were sixty-six to be provided for. Well, a famine is frightful enough when there is one man who is starving–when there is one brought down to a skeleton through leanness and hunger–but when sixty-six mouths are craving for bread, that is indeed a horrible plight to be in.

But what is this compared with the sinner's needs! His necessities are such that only Infinity can supply them. He has a demand before which the demands of sixty-six mouths are as nothing. He has before him the dreadful anticipation of a Hell from which there

is no escape. He has upon him the heavy hand of God, who has condemned him on account of his sins. What needs he? Why, all the manna that came down from Heaven in the wilderness would not supply a sinner's necessities and all the water that gushed from the rock in the desert would not be sufficient to quench his thirst.

Such is the need of the sinner, that all the hands full of Egypt's seven years would be lost upon him. He needs great mercy. The greatest of mercy–no, he needs an infinity of mercy and unless this is given him from above, he is worse than starved, for he dies the second death and lives in eternal death, without the hope of annihilation or escape. The demands of a hungry man are great. But the demands of a hungry soul are greater still. Until that soul gets the love and mercy of God manifested to it, it will always hunger and always thirst. Though it had worlds given it for mouthfuls, its hungry stomach would be still unsatisfied, for nothing but the Trinity can fill the heart of man. Nothing but an assurance of the everlasting, immutable love of God and an application of the most precious blood of Jesus can ever stay the terrible hunger of the sinner's soul.

Mark again–what these people wanted was an essential thing. They did not lack clothes, that were a want, but nothing like the lack of bread. For a man might exist with but scanty covering. They did not need luxuries–these they might want and our pity would not be so much excited. They did not need tents–without these they

might be able to satisfy the cravings of nature. They lacked bread–that without the fire of life would dwindle to a spark, which at last must die out in the darkness of death.

"Bread! Bread!" What a cry is that, when men gather together and in the days of scarcity make that their war cry. "Bread! Bread!" What is a more dreadful sound than that? "Fire! Fire!" may be more alarming, but "Bread! Bread!" is more piercing to the heart. The cry of "Fire!" rolls like thunder. The cry of "Bread!" flashes like lightning and withers one's soul. O that men should cry for bread–the absolute necessity for the sustenance of the body! But what is the sinner's want? Is it not exactly this? He wants that without which the soul must perish. Oh, Sinner, if it were health, if it were wealth, if it were comfort, which you were seeking, then you might sit down content and say, "I can do without these." But in this matter it is your soul, your never-dying soul, that is hungering and it is its salvation, its rescue from the flames of Hell, which now demands your attention. Oh, what a need is that–the need of the soul's salvation! Talk we of bread and of skeleton bodies? These are frightful things to look upon. But when we speak of a lack of bread and of dying perishing souls, there is something more frightful here. See, then, your case, you who are without the Grace of God. You have great necessity–necessity for essential things.

Yet again–the necessity of the sons of Jacob was a total one. They had no bread. There was none to be procured. So long as they had some of their own, they could stint themselves and diminish their rations and so, by moderation, maintain themselves. But they looked into the future and saw their children dying with hunger and not one crust with which to palliate their pangs. They saw their wives sickening before them and their babes at their breasts, unable to obtain nourishment from those dry fountains. They saw themselves at length, solitary, miserable men, with their hands on their loins, bundles of bones, crawling about the tents where their children lay dead and themselves without strength enough to bury them. They had a total lack of bread. They might have borne with scarceness–but a total lack of bread was horrible in the extreme.

Such is the sinner's case. It is not that he has a little grace and lacks more. But he has none at all. Of himself he has no grace. It is not that he has a little goodness and needs to be made better, but he has no goodness at all, no merits, no righteousness–nothing to bring to God, nothing to offer for his acceptance. He is penniless, poverty-stricken–everything is gone whereon his soul might feed. He may gnaw the dry bones of his own good works, but if the Lord has sent conviction into his heart, he will gnaw them in vain. He may try to break the bones of ceremonies, but he shall find that instead of marrow they contain gall and bitterness. He may hunger and hunger, because he has positively nothing with which he could

stay his stomach. Such is your case, then. How abject is such a necessity as this–a total lack of an essential thing for which you have an immense need.

But yet worse–with the exception of Egypt, the sons of Jacob were convinced that there was no food anywhere. I believe the reason why they looked one upon another was this. At first one looked at the other as much as to say, "Haven't you some to spare? Couldn't you give me some for my family?" Perhaps Dan appealed to Simeon, "Haven't you some? My child is starving this day. Can you help me?" Another might look at Judah. And perhaps they might fancy that Benjamin, the favorite, would surely have some morsel stored up. So they looked one to another. But soon, alas, The look of hope changed into the look of despair. They were quite certain that the necessities of each house had been so great, that no one could help the other. They had all come to poverty. And how can beggars help each other–when all are penniless?

And then they began to look upon one another in despair. In speechless silence they resigned themselves to the woe which threatened to overwhelm them. Such is the sinner's condition when first he begins to feel a hungering and thirsting after righteousness–he looks to others. He thinks, "Surely the minister can help me, the priest may assist me." "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." But after awhile he discovers that the state of all men is the same, that all are without grace, that "none can save his brother, or

give to God a ransom for him." And apart from Christ we, my dear Friends, this morning might look one on another, aghast and in despair–might try the wide world over and say, "Where is salvation to be found?" Oh, if it lay in the very center of the earth we could dig through the rocks and into the very bowels of the earth to find it. If it were in Heaven, we would seek to scale it with some Babel tower, that we might reach the blessing. If we had to walk through fire to gain it, we should gladly accept the burning pilgrimage. Or if we had to walk through the depths of the sea, we should be content to let all its billows roll over us–if we might find it.

If every man had to say to his fellow "there is no hope for us, we have all been condemned, we have all been guilty, we can do nothing to appease the Most High," what a wretched world were ours, if we were equally convinced of sin and equally convinced that there was no hope of mercy! This, then, was the condition of Jacob's sons temporally and it is our condition by nature spiritually. We are in a land of famine. We have nothing of our own. We are hungering, we are dying of hunger and our case seems totally hopeless, for on earth there is nothing to be found to satisfy the raving hunger of the soul.

II. Now we come, in the second place, to the GOOD NEWS. Jacob had faith and the ears of faith are always quiet. Faith can hear the tread of mercy, though the footfall be as light as that of the angel among the flowers. Though mercy should be a thousand

leagues away and its journey should occupy ten thousand years, yet faith could hear its footsteps, for it is quick of ear and quick of eye. No, more–if God should give a promise which should never be fulfilled till the old rolling skies were dissolved, faith would look through all the generations, along the vista of the centuries and see the spirit of promise afar off and rejoice therein.

Jacob had the ears of faith. He had been at prayer, I doubt not, asking God to deliver his family in the time of famine. And by-and-by he hears, first of his household, that there is corn in Egypt. Do you see the gathering? The venerable Patriarch sits in the tent. His sons come to pay him their morning obeisance. There is despair in their faces, they bring their little children with them. All that the Patriarch has he gives. But this morning he adds good news to his benediction, he says to them, "There is corn in Egypt." Can you conceive how their hearts leaped? He scarcely needs to add, "Get you down there and buy for us from there, that we may live and not die." Jacob heard the good news and communicated it as speedily as possible to his descendants.

Now, we also have heard the good news. Good news has been sent to us in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. "There is corn in Egypt." We need not die. There is salvation with God. We need not perish–there is mercy in the Most High. We need not think that we must necessarily be lost. There is a way of salvation. There is a hope of escape–do we not receive the tidings in joy? Do not our

hearts rejoice within us at the thought that we are not hopelessly condemned, but that the Lord may yet have mercy upon us? Now, we have better news than even Jacob had–although the news is similar, understanding it in a spiritual sense.

First, we are told today by sure and certain witnesses, that there is corn in Egypt, there is mercy in God. Jacob's messenger might have deceived him–idle tales are told everywhere and in days of famine men are very apt to tell a falsehood, thinking that to be true which they wish were so. The hungry man is apt to hope that there may be corn somewhere. And then he thinks there is. And then he says there is. And then, what begins with a wish comes to be a rumor and a report. But this day, my Friends, it is no idle talk–no dream, no rumor of a deceiver. There is mercy with God, there is salvation with Him, that He may be feared. The fountain is filled to the brim. The granaries are full of the good old corn of the kingdom. There is no reason why we should perish. By sure infallible and certain witness, we are told upon the very oath of God Himself that there is salvation for the sons of men. But Jacob did not know how much corn there was in Egypt. He said there was corn, but he did not know how much.

Now, today, we are something like Jacob. There is mercy with God. We do not know, any of us, how much. "Oh," says one sinner, "I am such a hungry soul, that all the granaries of Egypt would not be enough for me." Ah, but, poor Soul, God is all that you could

want, even though you should want an infinite supply. The sixty-six in the family of Jacob would make a heavy draw upon the granaries of any nation. But yet, so abundant were the storehouses in every city, that we do not read that Joseph missed all that he gave them. So it is with you. Your necessities are immense, but nothing equal to the supply. Your soul requires great mercy, but you will no more exhaust the mercy of God than the taking a cup full of water out of the sea would exhaust its fullness. High above the summits of your mountain-sins the stars of Grace are shining.

There is another thing in which we have better than Jacob. Jacob knew there was corn in Egypt, but did not know who had the keeping of it. If he had known that, he would have said, "My sons, go down at once to Egypt, do not be at all afraid, your brother is lord of Egypt and all the corn belongs to him." No, more–I can readily imagine that he would have gone himself, at once. And Simeon and the rest, though they might feel a little abashed, when they thought of the unkindness that they had shown to their brother–when they began to feel a little hungry, if they had known all about Joseph–they would have said, "We need not fear to go and submit ourselves to him, for we know he has a gracious and loving heart and would never let his poor brethren die of hunger."

Sinner, the mercies of God are under no lock and key except those over which Christ has the power. The granaries of Heaven's mercy have no steward to keep them except Christ. He is exalted

on high to give repentance and remission of sins. And the keys of grace are swinging at the girdle of your own Brother. He who died for you, He who loved you so much, that He loved you better than He did Himself–He has the keys of grace and will you fear to go? Will you tremble to go to these rich stores of mercy when they are in the hands of a loving, tender and ever-gracious Lord? No, this is good news, that all the grace is in the hands of Jesus.

There is yet another thing which the sons of Jacob knew nothing of. When they went to Egypt, they went haphazardly. If they knew there was corn, they were not sure they would get it. But when you and I go to Christ, we are invited guests. Suppose now you should have it in your heart to invite some of the most ragged people of London to your house. You give to each of them an invitation and they come to the door. Perhaps they are half ashamed to come in and want to steal round the back way. But if they should meet you, they are not at all abashed. They say, "Sir, I was not afraid to come, because you sent me an invitation. If it had not been for that, although I might have known your generosity, although I might have known you could afford to help me, I should not have dared to come if you had not sent me an invitation."

Now Joseph sent no invitation to his brothers. But Jesus has sent an invitation to you. To each of you who are perishing sinners He has said, "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." He has said Himself, "Him that comes unto Me I will

in no wise cast out." He has sent His messengers and bids them cry, "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters and he that has no money, come, buy and eat, yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Now, Sinner, you need never be afraid to go where you are invited. Christ Jesus invites. He invites the hungry, He invites the weary. Such are you–both hungry and weary. He invites the heavy laden–such are you. Come and welcome, then. You need not go on haphazardly, you have the invitation and the promise. Why do you look, then, at one another? Arise and come to Christ. Arise and come to His Cross. May He now prove in you His power to save!

But one other remark and I will have done with this second point. The sons of Jacob were in one respect better off than you are, apparently, for they had money with which to buy. Jacob was not a poor man in respect of wealth, although he had now become exceedingly poor from lack of bread. His sons had money to take with them. Glittering bars of gold they thought must surely attract the notice of the ruler of Egypt. You have no money, nothing to bring to Christ, nothing to offer Him. You offered Him something once, but He rejected all you offered Him as being spurious coin, imitations, counterfeits and good for nothing. And now utterly stripped, hopeless, penniless, you say you are afraid to go to Christ because you have nothing of your own.

Let me assure you that you are never in so fit a condition to go to Christ as when you have nowhere else to go and have nothing of your own. But you reply, “I should like at least to feel my need more.” That would be something of your own–you must go to Christ with nothing. “But I wish I could believe more.” That would be something of your own. You want to get your own faith to bring to Christ. No, you must go to Christ just as you are. “But Sir, I must reform myself before I can believe that Christ will have mercy upon me.” Your fancied reformation would unfit you for Grace, rather than prepare you for it. Reformation before grace is frequently a step backward instead of forward. That reformation may confirm you in self-righteousness, but it cannot bring you to Christ. Go as you are.

At a hospital, the best recommendation is sickness. He that is a little sick needs some help to get him there, but let me be run over in the street and be near to death and I need nothing to recommend me to the hospital–open flies the door and I am taken in directly. So a condition of your lost and ruined state is the only recommendation you need in going to Christ. Just now a lot of people want to bestow their charity and they do not know how to get at the lowest class of the poor. They want to lay hold of those whose beds are made of straw. They desire to gain knowledge of those low lodgingplaces of the very poor, which are worse than the places that beasts inhabit. These are the men they want to find. And

the greater the poverty the more recommendation. So in your case. Your woes plead with God. Your wants, your misery, your helplessness, your ill-deserts–these are the orators that move the heart of God towards you–but nothing else. Come just as you are, with nothing in your hand, to Jesus Christ, who is Lord over the land of mercy and will not send you away empty.

III. Thus I have noticed the good news as well as the pitiful plight. I come now to the third part, which is GOOD ADVICE. Jacob asks, "Why do you look one upon another?" And he said, "Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt. Get down there and buy for us from there, that we may live and not die." This is very practical advice. I wish people would act the same with religion as they do in temporal affairs. Jacob's sons did not say, "Well, that is very good news. I believe it," and then sit still and die. No, they went straightway to the place of which the good news told them corn was to be had. So should it be in matters of religion. We should not be content merely to hear the tidings, but we should never be satisfied until by Divine Grace we have availed ourselves of them and have found mercy in Christ.

Some ministers do, in fact, tell poor awakened sinners to be inactive. They say to them something like this–"You must wait, you must wait till Christ comes to you." They will even dissuade the woman who had an issue of blood, from pushing through the crowd to lay hold upon the hem of the Redeemer's garment. They

would bid the man who is crying aloud by the wayside to hold his tongue–to sit still quietly till Christ should turn and look upon him. They cannot endure that Christ Jesus should invite men to his feast, much less that the servants of the Lord should endeavor to compel them to come in. They excuse the sinner and even dare to teach that the rejection of Christ by the sinner is no sin at all.

Now, as in the sight of God, I do fear such men are guilty of the blood of souls. I would not stand in the position of a man who talks like that for all the stars thrice reckoned up in gold. I cannot understand that. I cannot understand that when my Master said, "Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you, for Him has God the Father sealed," that I am to tell a sinner to sit still. When the angel said, "Escape for your life. Look not behind you. Stay not in all the plain–but flee to the mountain, lest you are consumed," am I to go to Sodom and say to Lot, "Stop here till the Lord brings you out?" Why, we know for a face, that salvation is the Lord's work and the Lord's work alone.

But we equally know for a fact, that when the Lord works, He sets us to work. When He works in our soul, the Lord does not believe. He has nothing to believe, He makes us believe. When the Lord works repentance, He does not repent–what has He to repent of? He makes us repent. The Lord brought Lot out of Sodom, but did not Lot use his own legs to run to the mountain? And so it must

be with us. Christ does all, but He makes us the instruments. He tells us to stretch out our own withered hand and yet we do not stretch forth that withered hand of ourselves. He tells us to do it and we do it through His strength.

Tell a sinner to sit still? What does Hell desire more than that? Tell a sinner to wait–would not Satan approve of such a ministry? And does he not approve of it? Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, he that loves his Master, he that loves the Gospel, he that loves men's souls cannot preach such untruthful and unchristian doctrine. He feels that the humanity within him is much more than grace within him, revolts against a thing so barbarous and so inhuman as that. No, when we preach to the sinner, we must say to him, "You know your need, you feel that you cannot be saved except through mercy in Christ. Look to Him, believe on Him, seek Him and you shall find Him."

But I have heard it said, that if a sinner seeks Christ without Christ seeking Him he will perish. Now what an absurd thing for anybody to say. Because, did a sinner, or could a sinner ever seek Christ without Christ seeking him? I never like to suppose an impossibility and then draw an inference from it. "Suppose," said one, I know of–"a sinner should come to Christ without Christ coming to him, he would be lost." Well, that is very clear, only it is supposing a thing that cannot happen. And what is the good of that? Sometimes people have put to me this question–"Suppose a child

of God should live in sin and die in sin, would he be saved?" The thing is impossible. If you suppose yourself into a difficulty, you must suppose yourself out of it. It is like the old supposition, "Suppose the moon were cream cheese, what would become of us on a dark night?" So, suppose a sinner should come to Christ without Christ coming to him, what could be the result? It is supposing an impossibility and then drawing an absurdity from it. Christ said, "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him." If a sinner comes, he is drawn, or he would not have come. It is mine, therefore, to exhort the sinner to come to Christ. It is the Holy Spirit's work to enforce the exhortation and draw the sinner to Christ.

Lastly, let me put this question, "Why do you look one upon another?" Why do you sit still? Fly to Christ and find mercy. Oh, says one, "I cannot get what I expect to have." But what do you expect? I believe some of our hearers expect to feel an electric shock, or something of that kind, before they are saved. The Gospel says simply, "Believe." That they will not understand. They think there is to be something so mysterious about it. They can't make out what it is. But they are going to wait for it and then believe. Well, you will wait till doomsday. For if you do not believe this simple Gospel, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," God will not work signs and wonders to please your foolish desires.

Your position is this–you are a sinner, lost, ruined. You cannot help yourself. Scripture says, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” Your immediate business, your instantaneous duty is to cast yourself on that simple promise and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that as He came into the world to save sinners, He has therefore come to save you. What you have to do with is that simple command–“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall he saved.” Now take the sons of Jacob as your example. No sooner had their father told them what they had to do than the first thing they did was they went and fetched their empty sacks. Now do the same.

“What is the good of them?” You say, “there is no corn in them.” No I know there is not, still you must take your empty sacks and have them filled. Bring out your sins–bring out all the aggravation of your sins–cast them all at the feet of Christ and make your confession. There is no salvation in confession, but still you cannot have salvation without it. You must make a full and free confession of your sins. “What? To you, Sir?” I am extremely obliged to you. I would not hear your sins on any account. No sum of money would be sufficient compensation for the impurity that must accrue to any man who shall hear another’s sins. I would not tell you mine–much less hear yours. No, make your confessions to God. Go to your closet. Shut your door. Then pull out your empty sacks–that is,

make a full confession of your sins, Tell the Lord that you are a wretch undone without His Sovereign Grace.

When you have done that, you say, what next? Then cast away all hope you ever had or have, put away all trust in your good works and everything else. And what next? Cast yourself simply on this great Truth of God–that Jesus Christ came to save sinners–and you shall rise from your knees a happier man. Or if that is not the case, try it again and again and again and it shall not fail you. Prayer and faith were never lost. He who confessed his sins and sought the Savior never seeks in vain.

When I was first convicted of sin, yet a lad, I did go to God and I cried for mercy with all my might, but I did not find it. I do not think I knew what the Gospel was. For three years I persevered in that. And many a day, in every room of the house in which I lived, as each room became unoccupied, upon an occasion, have I spent hours in prayer, the tears rolling down my cheeks and straining myself in an agony of desire to find Christ and find salvation. But it never came. It was not until I heard that simple doctrine, "Look unto me and be you saved," I then found that my prayers were a kind of righteousness of my own–that I was relying on them–and consequently was on the wrong road.

Then did the Holy Spirit enable me to look to Christ hanging on the Cross. I did not give up my prayers, but I did put the Lord Jesus, the object of my faith, far above all prayers. And then when I

had looked to Him hanging, dying, bleeding, my soul rejoiced and I fell upon my knees no more to cry with agony, but to exclaim with delight, “Lord, I believe. Help You my unbelief.” But if in that day, instead of simply looking to Christ, I had said, “No, Lord, I will not wash in Jordan and be clean. I will wait till Elijah comes out and strikes the leper with his hand. I will not look to the brazen serpent. That is legal preaching, that is Arminian doctrine. I will wait till the serpent knocks right against my eyes,” it would have never come.

But having looked simply to Christ, I cast all my other trusts away. And how my soul rejoices in the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free. So shall it be with you. The Gospel is this day freely preached to you. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came down from Heaven, was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate–and was crucified for sin. Turn now your eyes to yonder Cross. Behold a God dying. Behold the Infinite hanging on the tree in pain. Those sufferings must save you–will you rely upon them? Without any other trust, shall the Cross be the unbuttressed pillar of your hope? It so, you are saved. The moment you believe in Jesus, the Redeemer, you are saved–your sins are forgiven. God has accepted you as His child. You are in a state of Grace. You are passed from death unto life. Not only are you not condemned but you never shall be. There is for you a crown, a harp, a mansion, in the realms of the glorified. Oh that God may help you now to go

down into Egypt for heavenly corn and may you return with your sacks full to the brim!

In conclusion, I make this last remark–Did you notice the argument Jacob used why the sons should go to Egypt? It was this–"That we may live and not die." Sinner, this is my argument with you this morning. My dear Hearers, the Gospel of Christ is a matter of life and death with you. It is not a matter of little importance, but of all importance. There is an alternative before you. You will either be eternally damned, or everlastingly saved. Despise Christ and neglect His great salvation and you will be lost, as sure as you live. Believe in Christ–put your trust alone in Him and everlasting life is yours. What argument can be more potent than this to men that love themselves? Are you prepared for everlasting burnings? Friend, are you ready to make your bed in Hell and to be lost? If so, reject Christ. But if you desire to be blessed forever, to be accepted of God in the tremendous Day of Judgment and to be crowned by Him in the day of the reward, I beseech you, hear again the Gospel and obey it. "He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned." For this is the Gospel. It is yet again preached to you and this is its solitary mandate–"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." O Lord, help us now to believe, if we have not believed before, for Jesus' sake!

Ge 42:1 • A Discourse to the Despairing

SERMON 2379

A *Discourse To The Despairing*

"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, Why do you look, one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get down there, and buy for us there; that we may live, and not die."

Genesis 42:1, 2

JACOB had reached an age in which natural vigor had gone out of him. He was getting very old and was worn and weary, yet here he seems to lead the way in providing for his family. It was he who spoke to the younger men, his sons, and urged them to go down into Egypt to buy food. Jacob was of a timorous disposition in his latter days–he had an old man's fear of that which is high and the

grasshopper had become a burden to him–yet he proposed to his sons that they should make a venturesome journey into Egypt! It was a great undertaking for them, for they were stay-at-homes, and not travelers. They were shepherds, whose time was occupied in looking after the welfare of their flocks, and not in roaming over foreign countries. They thought it would be a burdensome responsibility and a perilous risk to cross the desert and go down into Egypt, yet Jacob proposed this to them as the only way of escape from famine and death. Here is an instance in which an aged father woke up his sons to action by telling them good news and by chiding them because of their despairing looks and words.

I am going to use the passage in this way. There are many persons who are sitting down in a kind of stupor. They have no hope and, therefore, they are doing nothing at all. They need to be told the good and blessed tidings concerning salvation and to be urged to make a right use of that news and to avail themselves of the provision of which they are informed. I shall give myself, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, to the happy task of following out that line of thought under these three heads. First, despair is useless. "Why do you look, one upon another?" Secondly, hope is well-grounded. "I have heard that there is corn in Egypt." Thirdly, action is reasonable. "Get you down there, and buy for us there; that we may live, and not die."

First, DESPAIR IS USELESS.

I have never heard, yet, of anybody who derived any good from despair. Let me correct myself, there is a kind of despair which is the work of the Spirit of God. I wish that you all felt it–a despair of self-salvation, a despair of washing away your own sin, despair of obtaining any merit of your own by which you can become acceptable in the sight of God–but men never come to it unless the Spirit of God brings them. We are always ready to hope in ourselves with that self-conceited hope which is abhorrent to God. And it is a great mercy when, at last, the Spirit of God, like the hot blast of the Sirocco, passes over the green field and every flower therein is withered! What said the Prophet? "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness, thereof, is as the flower of the field: the grass withers, the flower fades: because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it: surely the people is grass." That is a blessed kind of despair! But of any other sort of despair, in reference to eternal things, I cannot say anything that is good. I believe that Giant Despair has his dungeons full of the skeletons of men–he is a giant and devours those who come in his way–and he never helped a pilgrim on the road to the Celestial City. He never worked any good to any soul that came under his power. I cannot set you free from his grasp, but I can and do pray that the Spirit of God may deliver you out of his clutches!

These sons of Jacob looked upon one another despairingly, it seems, and their old father watched their looks till, at last, he asked

them, “Why do you look, one upon another?” Their looks expressed great sadness. They had never before been in such a plight. No corn for the asses, no bread for the children, no food for themselves. Not one of them smiled, but grim sadness sat on every countenance, and all their faces gathered blackness. One looked at his brother and saw that he was sad. And that brother looked at the next one and perceived that he was mournful and gloomy. The light of a man’s countenance is often like the shining of the sun–one bright face will make another full of joy and gladness–but when all the sons of Jacob were sad, their sadness was increased as they looked, one upon another. Now, when a man knows that he has no hope. When he feels that he cannot save himself. When he hungers for the Bread of Life and yet has none of it–when he looks to others who are in same case, and they only reply, “It is even so. We are also starving. We are lost”–well, then, it is a sad, sad business altogether.

Next, their faces expressed inability. Judah looked on Reuben and Reuben stared back at his brother, as much as to say, “Do not gaze at me, Judah, for I cannot do anything! I have emptied my last sack of corn.” Then Reuben looked across to Simeon and Simeon turned to Zebulon–and they all shook their heads and each one said–“It is no use looking to me. I cannot relieve you in this time of famine, even in the slightest degree. I have more than I can do to take care of my own wife and children.” So is it when one sinner looks upon

another sinner. If really awakened to a true sense of his condition in the sight of God, each one says, “I cannot help you. I cannot even help myself.” There are a number of foolish virgins with their lamps all gone out, and they have not a drop of oil between them and, therefore, not one of them can help another. So, sadness and inability are both implied in old Jacob’s question to his sons, “Why do you look, one upon another?”

Besides that, I have no doubt that there was a great degree of bewilderment expressed on their countenances. One asked his brother, “Cannot you suggest anything?” “No,” replied the other, “I am at my wits' end. I never was so puzzled before.” “But, surely, So-and-So, the one member of the family who has always been so quick with his suggestions, will have something to say in this crisis.” No, not one of them had anything that he could contribute towards the hopefulness of the outlook. Sad, indeed, was the household in which all the brothers seemed, each one, more bewildered than the rest! So, if I were to gather, here, a company of men, awakened to a sense of their true condition as sinners, but not yet led to faith in Christ, and if I were to ask them, “What is to be done to deliver you from this sad state?” they would, in utter bewilderment, look first at me, and then at one another, and sadly say, “What can we do?” One of them might even cry, with John Newton–

“The help of men and angels joined

Could never reach my case”

and in his perplexity he might forget to quote the two lines that follow–

“Nor can I hope relief to find

But in Your boundless Grace.”

Such a man might say, “If all in this world who love me were to conspire together to assist me out of the deep pit of sin into which I have fallen, they could not lift me a single inch!”

Bewilderment, then, was upon the faces of the 12 sons of Jacob.

Their looks also expressed apprehension. As they looked on each other, their faces wan, their persons gaunt, each one seemed to say to his brother, “I dare not tell you what I think.” And the other would reply, “I knew what you meant before the dreadful words came from your lips, for what can this long famine bring but absolute starvation? We shall see our poor old father die, or, perhaps, we shall, ourselves, perish, and all our children with us before the old man passes away. Anyway, we are doomed. We cannot eat the grass. We cannot devour what the birds of Heaven might live upon–there is nothing for us to do but to die. There is no corn in the land. There is universal famine–grim death will soon overtake us.” So they looked at one another every day with more and more of anxious foreboding, for the famine was in the land of Canaan as well as in all the other parts of the earth.

But, dear Friends, what good did their sad looks and their perplexed looks do? They did not make one mess of pottage for any of them! They did not grind for them even a single grain of corn! They were as bad off after all their despair as they were before it–their waiting was absolutely useless–no improvement in their condition came of it! And addressing you, my despairing friend, to whom I am sent tonight, I do not think that I ever saw you before, but you are here, and I am sent to speak thus to you! You have believed that there was no hope for you. You did not think that you could be saved and you have been, now, for years in that sad condition! What is the use of it to you? What is the good of all your despair? It has not improved you in the least! It has not even kept you back from sin. It has just made you sit in you. God help you to shake yourself clear of it even now! There is a lie at the bottom of your despair–there is hope–there is hope for the very chief of sinners! Do not believe what Satan tells you, that you must sit still and die.

The waiting time of the sons of Jacob was wasting time. If they had started earlier, they might have reached Egypt and, perhaps, have been back, again, with the corn which they had bought. But now the weary hours which brought them no hope were depriving them of the possibility of deliverance. So, dear Hearers, you have waited because you did not think that there was a possibility of your being saved–and all this waiting time has been wasted! Would

God that you had been converted when you were a boy! Would God that you had known my Lord when you were a young man and started out in business! Oh, that you had known Him even in middle life! But now you are growing gray. Surely, the time past suffices to have been wasted. May God help you to begin, tonight, to obtain that heavenly bread, that true corn upon which your soul may feed!

These sons of Jacob had waited so long that if they delayed much longer, they could never go, for they would all be dead. Did not their old father hint at that when he said to them, "Get you down there, and buy for us there; that we may live, and not die"? Death seemed waiting for them outside the door and if bread did not soon come in, they would all have to be carried out as corpses. So, Sinner, you have waited long enough, and far too long! You have tarried so long that if you wait much longer, the great knell of your soul will toll out with that most dismal sound, "Lost, lost, lost, and lost forever!" God grant that this may not come to pass, but may the Word of the Lord, which I am declaring in my Master's name, lead you to another course of action than that of sitting still and looking, one upon another! I repeat what I said before, despair is useless! I think that you who have tried it are quite convinced that it is so–you cannot squeeze any juice out of this flint! You can dig nothing that will help you out of this barren soil!

II. But now, secondly, HOPE, as we preach it to the very chief of sinners, IS WELL-GROUNDED.

In the story before us, old Jacob said to his sons, "Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt." Good news had been heard. Did you notice that the first verse put it rather differently–"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt"? There is a good old proverb, quaint but true, "Faith sees with its ears." It is a new use for ears, according to some people's notions. My own opinion is that there is no organ that we have with which we can see so well as we can with our ears if we use them aright. In spiritual things, "faith comes by hearing," and that faith becomes the sight of things hoped for! Good old Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt and he heard that there was corn in Egypt. That is to say, he heard it upon such good evidence that the old gentleman seemed to see it! He had questioned some passing travelers, some Ishmaelites, some wandering Bedouins, who had answered him, "Oh, yes, there is corn in Egypt! We have been down there–we have bought sacks full of it! We have brought it away with us. We know it is so, for here it is." And Jacob, though yet very timorous, weighed the evidence, and judged all about the matter, and he said to himself, "Oh, yes! It is quite clear, I see that there is corn in Egypt."

Well now, dear Friends, the most of you now present and, I should think, all of you who have come through the rain this wet night, have heard this good news! "Heard it?" you say, "we have

heard it times out of mind." I wonder how many times you have heard it? It would be worthwhile to sit down and figure away, to see if you could calculate how many times you have heard the Gospel. You know, when a boy has a father who is what a father ought to be, he says to him, "Do not let me have to speak to you twice, Sir." If he does speak to him twice, he says, "Do you think I am going to speak to you three times? Listen, I shall not stop at speaking if you do not listen pretty soon!" Would you kindly set down on a sheet of paper, not perhaps on a slate, for you might wipe it off, there–write down how many times God has spoken to you, distinctly, in the preaching of the Word? I will not ask you to reckon up how many times He has spoken to you in private, on your bed and so on. Some of you have heard thousands of sermons, but they have done you no good. I am afraid that you are like Bunyan's Slough of Despond. Many thousands of tons of the best road making material had been poured into that slough and it took it all in–and it was as bad a slough as ever! And is it not so with some of you?

I get astonished at some of you people who come and hear me whenever you can. I am not going to look at the particular persons to whom I refer, but it does astonish me when I know that there are those who have come here for years, and yet are as bare of religion as the palm of my hand is of hair! If you ask the wife or children about them, you will find that though they say, "we enjoy Mr.

Spurgeon's ministry," yet they enjoy the drink rather more on certain other days! They would not miss a sermon! Yes, and they will even come to Prayer Meetings and enjoy Prayer Meetings. But still, ah me! Well, I will not say all that I know. May God have mercy upon such people! But what am I to do? Am I to keep on preaching to people like that? Am I to go on perpetually washing Blackamoors who will never be a bit the whiter? God have mercy upon you and upon me, too, and grant that I may not labor in vain towards you, lest in the end your guilt should be increased by the rejection of His Truth!

The good news has been heard by all of you. Whatever may be the destiny of the heathen, they can, at the last, say, "We never heard of Christ. We were never bid to come and put our trust in Him. We never knew the story of the Cross and all the love of God in Christ Jesus." You cannot say that, but you will have to confess, some of you, in that Great Day, that you closed your ears to it all and would have none of it. The Lord prevent it, by His mercy!

Well, the good news has been heard, dear Friends, and, by many of us, the good news has been believed. I believe with Jacob that there is corn in Egypt, that is to say, I believe that there is salvation in Christ Jesus, that it has, "pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." There are many here who believe that Truth of God with me. There are myriads, all over the world, who believe this and who have seen it for themselves–there is pardon for sin!

There is renewal of nature! There is every blessing that is needed, stored up in Jesus Christ! The good news has been heard and the good news has been believed! If I were to ask you to stand up and give your testimony after the manner of the Salvation Army, very many here would do so, each one saying, "I believe it. It is even so. I have proved it to be true."

Further, the good news conveyed to you is to the point. Suppose that Jacob had said to his sons, "I believe that there is gold in Egypt," they might have asked him, "What has that to do with us?" Suppose he had said, "I believe that there is fine linen in Egypt." They did not need fine linen. Suppose he had said, "I believe that there are chariots in Egypt, and horses," for there were such in abundance. Solomon was known, in later days, to bring them out of Egypt. Yet Jacob's sons would have said, "Dear Father, we do not need horses. We do not want chariots. What we need is bread, for we are dying, or soon shall die, of hunger." Well now, my dear Hearers, there is, in Christ Jesus, exactly what you need! If you are guilty, there is pardon! If you are weak, there is strength! If you are foul, there is cleansing! If you are naked, there is clothing! If you are dead, there is life! In fact, there is, in Christ, all that you can possibly need! Christ is as much fitted for you as a glove is for a hand and He is exactly fitted for you, Mary, Thomas, or whoever you are–even as when I came to Him, I found Him to be exactly fitted for me! He is the very Savior for such a sinner as you!

Well now, this is good news concerning an available blessing. Supposing Jacob had said, “Dear sons, there is plenty of corn in Egypt, but you cannot have any of it. If you go down there, they will not sell any corn to you.” Now, we who believe in the Doctrine of Election are supposed to say to some men, “It is of no use for you to believe–you will not have the blessing.” I never said–I never thought such a thing–nor did any other preacher of the Doctrine of Election! We have freely declared to every man that whoever believes in Christ Jesus has everlasting life! And though we believe that God knows who will have it, even as God knew who would go down into Egypt, yet that does not in the least affect the freeness of the preaching of the Gospel! Let those who hear us bear witness to the fact. There was never a man, or woman, or child, yet, who applied to God through Jesus Christ for mercy, who was refused. “Him that comes to Me,” says Christ, “I will in no wise cast out.” If you believe, you live. If you believe, you are saved. We have eternal life when we come and trust in Jesus. Believe and receive it at the hands of Christ. “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” Let that bell ring round the Tabernacle! “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” If you believe, eternal life is yours. So, this good news is concerning an available blessing.

And, once more, this good news is in the present tense. Jacob did not say to his sons, “There was corn in Egypt,” but, “I have heard that there is corn in Egypt.” So say I to you–“There is salvation.

There is forgiveness. There is acceptance, there is reconciliation–there is eternal life!" There is, in Christ Jesus, all that is necessary to lift a soul from the portals of Hell to the gates of Heaven! There is now, on this 15 th day of the month of July, 1888–there is corn in Egypt,there is eternal life for all who trust in Jesus–

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!

There is life at this moment for you!"

I do not know how to preach more plainly and simply to you. The last thing that crosses my mind is to try and make"a fine discourse." All I want to do is to talk right to your hearts about the way to Heaven–and not to let you go until you have come to Jesus and have trusted in Him.

So I have set before you two things, first, that despair is useless, and, next, that there is a hope which is well grounded. There is nothing more certain in this world than that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved. I wish that you would all come and try, and see for yourselves, for we have not preached to you cunningly-devised fables, but the most sure Word of God, which we have tasted and handled for ourselves!

III. So I shall close with my third division–ACTION IS REASONABLE.

O my dear despairing Hearer, I say again that I do not know who you may be, but I know that I am sent to you, tonight, with a message! I wish that I knew you, so that I could take you by the

hand and have you here on this very platform, and look into your eyes with my eyes. But as I cannot do that, I will speak to you as if I were doing it.

It was time that these men should go at once to Egypt, for they would die if they did not go. They could but die if they went to Egypt–if they were met by robbers on the road, and killed, they could but die. This is your case. Without Christ, you must eternally die–there is no hope for you. Remain as you are and you are damned. No, I soften not the word, for it is no light sentence which the word conveys. If you do not find Christ, you are lost forever! Say, then, as we have often sung–

"I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try!
For if I stay away,
I know I must forever die."

I will here bring up Giant Despair if I can, in the rear, that he may howl a little at you, and set your feet in motion. There is no hope for you unless you go to the Savior, even to Jesus Christ. You must die if you do not go to Him.

It was very reasonable that Jacob's sons should go down to Egypt, for evidently others had gone there and had found corn. O man, would to God that you would repent and leave your sins, and come to Christ, for others have done so, and they have found eternal life! There never was, there never will be, there cannot be one who ever

obeyed the Gospel call and yet was disappointed! I challenge the depths of Hades and the deep abyss of Hell, itself, to display a single soul that truly sought the Lord and was refused! No, if you come to Him by Jesus Christ, He must receive you. Therefore, you who feel your need of Christ, I beseech you to awaken yourselves and seek Him now!

Further, these sons of Jacob got what they went for. They went to buy corn, and corn they bought, and plenty of it. And you may fare better than they did. It is not half such a task for you to go to Jesus as it was for them to go to Egypt. You can get to Christ in the twinkling of an eye! Behold, He comes flying to your relief. One look of faith and you are at His feet! Trust is the great railway that will bear you to the blessed terminal of salvation!

The sons of Jacob found in Egypt what they went for and they found it on better terms than they supposed. Jacob said, "Buy for us there," but they had their money put back in the mouth of their sacks! Joseph did not want their money–he would not sell anything to his own brothers, he would give them whatever they needed! The Lord Jesus Christ does not need your money. He does not even need your repentance and your faith as the purchase-price of salvation. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." It is a free gift to you who are poor as beggary itself. Do but come and you shall find how free are the gifts of Sovereign Grace!

And, in addition, Jacob's sons gained a great deal more than they bargained for, for while they brought corn home, they found that there was a great man in Egypt who was their brother–and they were invited to go and stay with him and they were made great men in that land! Oh, if you will but come to Christ, you will come for silver, but you will get gold! You will come for gold and He will give you diamonds! You will come for a rag and He will give you a royal robe! You will come to Him for life and He will give you everlasting glory! He gives infinitely more than any of us dare to ask, or even think–and happy is that man who does but come to Him! Oh, if you had any idea of what Christ will make of you, you would want wings to your heels to fly to Him with all your might! If that young woman did but know what joy the love of Christ would pour into her heart, she would not wait till tomorrow's sun had risen ere she had laid hold of Jesus Christ! When we come to Christ, there is a destiny before us which an angel's future does not rival! We become brothers of Christ, heirs of God, peers of the blood imperial, exalted to sit with Christ upon His heavenly Throne and to share in all His joys! Would God that you would come! If you did but know what is to be had by trusting in Jesus, how swiftly you would be drawn to Him!–

"His worth, if all the nations knew for
Sure, the whole world would love Him, too,"

and if they did but know what He gives, they would hold out both hands and take from Him, now, all that He delights to

I have finished my discourse to the despairing when I have made just two or three concluding remarks.

These sons of Jacob went down into Egypt and they did well. Right reasoning led them to go when they heard that there was corn there and knew that they needed it. But they were never invited to go there. Joseph did not send an invitation to Jacob, Reuben, Judah and Simeon, saying, "Come down into Egypt." Up to the moment when he revealed himself, they did not know that he was there. They were never invited and yet they went. Is there anybody here who says, "I do not think I am invited in the Bible to trust Christ"? Then come to Him whether you are invited or not! Do as these men did–they were not invited, but they went! The feasts of God are of this kind, "Whoever will, let him come." There are no tickets demanded at God's gate of mercy. If you come, you would not have come if He had not drawn you, for no man can come to Christ unless the Father, who sent His Son, draws him, and, "Him that comes to Me," says Christ, "I will in no wise cast out." You are the right man if you but come, for the wrong man never came, never can come and never thinks of coming! You are the man to be saved if you but trust Christ!

But I must remind you that there are many of you who have been invited, pressed, urged, entreated with tears to come to Christ. I

will not say anything about the many times that I have tried to press those things upon you, for I feel my feebleness, and, if you refuse me, I do not wonder. But still, if I knew how to put eternal things before you better than I do, how earnestly would I labor for the salvation of your souls! Sometimes, when I am at home, I say to myself, "That is it. I think I see, now, how to put the Truth of God to the people." But when I get here, I do not feel that I can speak as I desire. What more is a man to say than to tell you that you are in danger, that you will perish if you despair of hope, that there is good ground for hope and, that if you come to your God, trusting in Jesus as your Savior, He will never cast you away? Therefore, come, and come at once! Come even now, while sitting in those pews! What more can I say? Spirit of God, You say whatever more is needed and make what is said to go home to the hearts of the hearers!

Now, note again, that you are in a better state than the sons of Jacob, for you are invited, and next, you have no journey to make. How far is it to Christ? Well, there is no distance! If you believe, He is there. Our railway people, as a rule, in making railways to a certain town, do not make the railway to the town, but within a half-mile, or a mile, or two miles, so that you must have an omnibus or a cab to get into the town. And there is far too much Gospel preaching that is like that. It is so far before you get to

Christ and when you do get to Him, it needs another journey in your own omnibus to finish up the work!

But I believe that the railway to Heaven for you starts just there, in that pew where you are sitting, and that it goes all the way, and that if you enter the glorious Free-Grace train, it will carry you to the terminal! And if you take a ticket, tonight, with a simple trust in the Lord Jesus, you will not need any new ticket, but it will take you all the way through! Oh, I would to God that by faith you would take that ticket right now! There is a journey to get to Heaven, but there is no journey to get to Christ, for He is here! You need a Mediator between your souls and God, but you do not need a Mediator between your souls and Christ! You must be prepared to see God in Heaven, but you need not be prepared to see Christ on earth! You may come to Him just as you are! Here He is, look at Him by faith and the great transaction is done!

Last of all, you are informed, as these sons of Jacob were not informed, that no payment is required. Jacob said to his sons, "Take money in your hand," and when they went the next time, he said, "Take double money in your hand." That was very honest on his part, to send money to make up for what had been put back in the sacks, as well as the double price, for the wheat would have risen since the last time, and old Jacob also said, "Take of the best fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and

almonds." That is just what human nature says, "Take Christ a present. Carry something with you." Now, I would advise you to drop that present into the sea! Do not take anything with you to Christ except your emptiness. That is all He wants–take your emptiness, and He will fill it! Take your sin, and He will wash it away!

When persons advertise that they clean garments–(you see their notices everywhere, nowadays, a wonderful trade it must be)–do they expect that when you send a coat to be cleaned, you are to put a guinea in the pocket? Oh, dear no! You send the garment to be cleaned–you will have to pay for the work, one of these days, but you need not put sovereigns in the pocket! Just take your soul to Christ to be cleansed, with nothing but the spot, and the stain, and the filth–and He will make it whiter than the driven snow!

The Holy Spirit's message is, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Tarry not to cleanse or mend, but come to Christ just as you are and come at once! Sons of Jacob, starving for need of heavenly food, look no longer, one upon another, but up and away to the Christ who has a superabundance of everything you need! Freely He invites you–gladly go to Him! Spirit of God, compel them to do so, by Your sweet love, for Jesus' sake! Amen.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"– 531, 375, 435.

Ge 42:6 • Rough, But Friendly

SERMON 3379

R*ough, But Friendly*

"Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provisions for the way: and thus did he unto them."

Genesis 42:25

AN immense number of persons came down into Egypt from all parts of the world to buy corn. Many of these Joseph never saw. Many others came into his presence. I do not find that of all who came, he treated any of them roughly, except his own brothers. "Strange!" you will say, and if you did not know the sequel of the story, it would not only seem strange, but cruel. You would not know how to account for such a thing.

Very like this is the manner of God's Providence. There are thousands of people living in this world, with all of whom God deals according to wisdom. We all bear trouble in a measure, for, "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upwards."Some have more troubles than others and these often happen to be those who are dearest to the Lord. If any man escapes the rod, the true-born children of the royal family of Heaven never can! Some may sin and prosper, but the righteous, if they sin, suffer. The ungodly are permitted to fatten like sheep for the slaughter, to have no bands even in their death. Their strength is firm, they are not in trouble, as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. But as for God's people, the waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. Through much tribulation they inherit the Kingdom. To them is a special promise which is sure to be fulfilled–"In the world you shall have tribulation." Now, if we did not know the end of the Lord and His great design in thus dealing with His people, it would seem to be a strange, inexplicable mystery that the best beloved should be the most afflicted and that the Brothers and Sisters of the reigning Savior should be those whom He treats most roughly. Others take their sacks of corn and go–these, 'tis true, shall have their sacks filled and more–but they shall not go until first there have been some rough passages of arms between them and the Brother, who, though he loves them so well, speaks so shortly to them!

Laying it down, then, as a rule, that God's servants will be dealt roughly with by their Master, that the Brothers and Sisters of Christ must accept it, I shall now proceed to offer a few thoughts, which, perhaps, may be comfortable to those of God's people who are in trouble. From the text and its surroundings, I gather this Truth of God–

WHEN THE LORD IS ABOUT TO GIVE GREAT FAVORS, HE OFTEN DEALS ROUGHLY WITH THOSE WHO ARE TO RECEIVE THEM.

Joseph intends to bless his brothers. He has the most liberal of the royal designs towards them, but he first deals roughly with them. Before the Lord Jesus Christ shall come to give His Church her last and most transcendent blessing in His millennial reign of splendor, there are vials that are to be poured out. There will be wars and rumors of wars. There will be the shaking of Heaven and earth– great distress, famine, pestilences and earthquakes. The greater the blessing, the greater the trial that shall precede it! So, too, with our own souls. When the Lord Jesus Christ intended to save us and to give us a sense of pardon of our sins, He began by convincing us of our iniquity. He dealt heavy blows at our selfrighteousness. He laid us in the dust and seemed to roll us in the mire. It seemed as though He delighted to tread upon us and to crush our every hope and destroy every fond expectation! It was all to wean us from self-righteousness, to pull us up by the roots, to prevent our growing

and taking fast hold on the earth, to compel us to rest in His blood and righteousness and to seek our soul's life entirely from Him! That great blessing of salvation was, with the most of us, at any rate, preceded by thick clouds and tempests! We were convinced of sin, of self-righteousness, of judgment to come, and our heart trembled! And afterwards, when He had dealt roughly with us, He said, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you: go in peace." It seems, then, our experience is general and common, that the love letters of our Lord Christ have come to us in black envelopes and there has generally been a thunderstorm preceding a shower of special mercy! The clear shinings have been after the rain. The flood tide has come in most gloriously, but there has first been an ebb. It has always been so with us till now. I think experienced Christians begin to dread their joy and to expect blessings from their sorrows. When things apparently go bad, they know they really go well, and when things apparently go well, we are very apt to fear and tremble for all the good which God makes to pass before us and fear, lest in the dead calm, there may lurk some mischief to our souls.

Why does the Lord deal roughly with His servants when He means to bless them? Is it not to keep them sober? Highspiritual joys have about them an intoxicating element to our poor nature. "Lest I should be exalted above measure," said the Apostle, "there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to

buffet me." Sometimes the trial comes before the mercy, sometimes with the mercy, sometimes after the mercy–but a trial and a high degree of spiritual joy are usually wedded together so that when you get the one–you may look out of the window for the other. 'Tis to keep us sober. Here is a brisk gale of spiritual influence upon our fluttering sail. What then? And why? Our poor boat would soon be upset, but God ballasts us with a weight of affliction, so that the vessel may keep steady amidst the waves. Master Brookes gives us a simile in which he shows us the danger there is even in the best and most spiritual enjoyments–he says, "Suppose a man loved his wife so very dearly and gave her so many rings, jewels and earrings, that she prized these and wore them till she began, by-and-by, to dote upon her ornaments and to forget her husband? You could not blame him if he took these away because he wants her love for himself, not for his gifts." Now, instead of taking away these things, which it would be necessary for Him to do in order to keep us from spiritual ruin, the Lord is pleased to checker our lives. There are the bright stripes, or evidences of Grace, and then there are the black squares of our troubles and afflictions. In that way an equilibrium is kept up–we are balanced–we do not grow top-heavy. And we are enabled to walk safely in the ways of the Lord. That is one reason He speaks roughly and deals graciously, to keep us sober.

Is it not likewise, to keep us humble? When a child of God gets one inch above the ground in his own esteem, he getsan inch too high! Whenever the man of God says, “I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing,” he is very close to spiritual bankruptcy! None are so rich in Grace as those who pine for more. None are so near to fullness as those who mourn their emptiness– the men who find their fullness not in themselves, but in Christ Jesus the Lord! Brothers and Sisters, those 10 sons of Jacob must have felt their importance evaporate when Joseph put them in prison. Here they were “true men,” as they said, “the sons of one man,” but no respect is paid to the Patriarch or to their patriarchal descent. They are put in prison as if they were common spies whose fate is generally the most ignoble. Now they begin to think of themselves in a very different light from that in which they did when they set out with their money in their hands to pay for their corn and have their money’s worth. They were gentlemen, merchant traders when they entered Egypt, but after awhile they seemed like beggars in their own esteem and better still, they begin to remember their faults! They call to remembrance that they were verily guilty concerning their brother. And the Lord never intends us to ride the high horse in thinking large things of ourselves. One thing I have always noticed as an observer, that whenever any man of God begins to get great, God always makes him smart. I think I have never seen a Brother prospering in the ministry, or anywhere

else, who began to be too large for association with his brethren, too good and too holy, perhaps, even to meet with common Christians–such a man has never kept up long–that balloon has come down–that bubble has, before long, gone to pieces. The profession of very extreme holiness has generally ended in the most dolorous iniquity and the professed exaltation of the heart on account of talent and success has generally led to degradation and shame! Hence the Lord, who would not have us exalted above measure, speaks roughly to us to keep us humble, as well as to keep us sober.

Why does He deal roughly with us? Is it not to give us another reason for coming to Him? Jacob's sons might nothave come down to Egypt again. They might have said, "We would rather starve than go to be bull-baited by the lord of the land." But when Simeon is in prison they must go down. They have a reason for going and a reason which overcomes them, let them strive against it as they may! And, child of God, when the Lord favors you with His smile and with the light of His Countenance, He takes care at the same time to give you a trouble that shall compel you to come to the Mercy Seat. Oh, but I think it is a blessed thing to go to the Throne of Grace on an errand! Many pray out of custom, perhaps that is well, but I believe there is no praying like the praying of a man who has got an errand–he who goes to God because he needs, must go because he has something to ask for–and these rough dealings of

God keep us well stocked withmotives for being much on our knees, for much pleading with the Father of Mercies that He would deliver us out of affliction and out of temptation–and is not this kindness on our Father's part thus to deal roughly with us that He may compel us to the sweet duty of prayer?

Moreover, Brothers and Sisters, does it not strike you that the Lord's rough dealings with His children, when He intends to bless them, have the effect of making them see how utterly dependent they are for that blessing from Him? Why,Jacob's sons could now see that Joseph could lock them up for life, or take away their lives, or could send them back, if he pleased, with empty sacks to starve! They were entirely in his hands. They had no more power to escape than the dove has from the talons of the hawk. So God would have us know that we are entirely and absolutely in His hands, as the clay in the hand of the potter. If He pleases to withhold His hand, all the world and all Heaven cannot help us! If the Lord did not help you, how shall I help you out of the barn floor, or out of the winepress? That well stopped, all the world is walled up–there are no other bottles that can water you. Child of God, you are as dependant today upon the bounty of Heaven as at your conversion! A babe in Grace is not more dependent upon God than the mature and venerable Christian! Our life is in the hands of Christ. Our breath is in His nostrils. Let the foundations of our lives, either natural or spiritual, be taken away by a cessation of Divine Power

and we crumble into spiritual and into physical death! We shall hold on our way, glory be to God, but not from any power that is in us, nor through our own innate strength! These shall melt away and droop and die under the exigencies of our spiritual pilgrimage. It is from the overflowing fountains of inexhaustible strength we must derive our supplies and so hold on to the end. Thus, treating us roughly makes us like bottles in the smoke–we become dry, shriveled up and empty–but still, it leads us to see how much the Lord can do for us. Being brought into need, it shows that all that is done, is done of His mercy and His sovereignty–not of our merit, nor through any concurrent help from us–but altogether, utterly and alone of Him!

Now, child of God, let me put this point to you very plainly. Without saying anything further, are you in very deep trouble tonight? Do all God's waves and billows go over you? Does deep call unto deep at the noise of His waterspouts? Then expect that now some great blessing will come of it! That stone on the lapidary's wheel has been cut, and cut, and cut again. That other stone in the corner of the shop is but a common pebble and he never vexes it upon the wheel, for it is worthless. But the more precious the stone is in His esteem, the more diligently does He cut its facets. You are dear to God. Therefore is it that He tries you again and again, but good shall come of it and you shall blaze and sparkle, and glitter with Divine Grace which would have been

otherwise unknown to you! Your tribulation shall work patience in you, and patience shall work experience, and experience hope, and hope shall make you not to be ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in you. You are trading in a profitable market! There is no usury so heavy as the interest of affliction. The black ships of trouble come home laden with pearls of Grace. Therefore, be of good cheer. Take the rough usage from your Brother Joseph–you must and will prevai1! But I must change the tune. Our next observation upon the text is that while the Lord deals roughly with His servants–

II. HE USUALLY GIVES THEM AT THE SAME TIME PROVISION BY THE WAY so that they may be enabled to bear His roughness and to endure all the difficulties through which they are called to pass.

You observe Joseph had put Simeon in prison and had treated his other brothers very roughly, yet he gave them their sacks full of corn and put money into the mouths of their sacks. And then, as a third blessing, he gave them provisions for the way. Never does a child of God pass through trial without some special provision being made for him during his time of need.

But what provision is this? Why , dear Brothers and Sisters, there are different provisions according to differentneeds! Sometimes the child of God under trial has a wonderful sense of Divine Love. “Oh, how He loves me,” he says.There comes stroke after stroke–

husband dies, child is buried, the property is wasted–yet the dear child says, “I cannot weep or repine, for I feel God loves me. I know not how it is, but I feel it so fresh and strong upon my soul and I have such a wonderful impression of that dear love of His, that it quite overcomes my sorrows and takes the edge off my grief.” And, let me say, there is nothing that under trial can support a soul so well as the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us! To know that my Father sees it all and orders all in love–in special love to me–oh, this makes the back strong enough to bear a very world of trouble and yet not to be wearied!

At other times God’s servants have been fed on a joyous view of the Covenant of Grace. I have known some who intheir trouble have come to understand the deep doctrines of the Word of God as they never understood them before and could then say with David, “Although my house is not so with God, yet has He made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” And as they look to the provisions of that Covenant, to the sureness of the Covenant, to the blessings of the Covenant, to the everlasting nature of the Covenant, their souls have been so ravished and transported with joy that they could beat poverty, or pain, or whatever form of roughness their heavenly Joseph might choose to put upon them!

Others of the Lord’s people have been sustained in their trouble by a delightful outlook to the end of their sorrowsand the better land on the other side of Jordan. Oh, there have been saints upon sick beds who have scarcely felt the torture of their pain or their disease, through the excess of bliss they have enjoyed in foretastes of the better land! Martyrs have been heard to call the fiery branches a bed of roses! And sometimes it has been almost questionable whether they suffered or not! The bodily pain must have been there, but the wonderful excitement of sacred joy in the thought that they were so soon to be with Christ and that their burning pile was but a chariot of fire to bear them to their Beloved has lifted them up above the tormenting sensation! They have been treated roughly, but they have had such provision by the way that they forgot the roughness as they rejoiced with unspeakable joy and full of glory! Well may the traveler trip over a rough road when his home is so near before him–the glittering spires of the new Jerusalem, the everlasting rest, the sweet fields arrayed in living green, the rivers of delight–

"

Ohcould we stand where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o'er–
Not Jordan’s stream nor death’s cold flood
Should fright us from the shore."

Roughly treat us as You will, good Lord, if we have this money in our sack's mouth and this provision by the way, we will be well content!

The Lord sometimes sustains His people under His own roughness by the recollection of their past experiences. "MyGod, my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember You from Hermon and from the hill Mizar." The faithfulness of God in the past has been so vividly remembered that the child of God could not dare to doubt! The evidence of God's love was so strong, vehement and fresh in his soul that he cried, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him; let Him do what He will to me, yet do I know that in very faithfulness He has afflicted me." He could hear these silver bells, thousands of them, all around, above, below, beneath–ringing out this tune–

"For His mercy shall endure,

Ever faithful, ever sure."

Oh, let the Hell drum be beaten as loudly as the devil can beat it and let affliction come from Heaven, earth and Hell all at once–as long as we know that God's mercy endures forever, our mouth shall be filled with laughter and we shall boast in the name of the Lord!

The saints of God have also had this provision by the way. In their sufferings they have enjoyed a sight of the greatersufferings of Christ–

"Why

should I complain of want or distress,
Temptation or pain? He told me no less.
The heirs of salvation, I know from His Word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord.
How bitter that cup, no heart can conceive,
Which He drank quite up that sinners might live!
His way was much rougher and darker than mine–
Did Christ my Lord suffer, and shall I repine?"

A sight of the steps of the Crucified One has often checked the tears which have been flowing, while the enraptured child of God would stand and sing in holy wonder–

"Christ leads me through no darker rooms
Than He went through before–
He that into this Kingdom comes
Must enter by this door."

Thus I might continue to show what kind of provision it is that the Lord gives by the way, but the time fails me. Inmay the Holy Spirit comfort you with it! You shall never be sent on a journey without provender and you shall never have to go to battle at your own charges. If the Lord tries you, it shall never be above what you are able to bear, for He will, with the temptation, make a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. He may treat you roughly, but He will fill your sack. He may speak sharp words, but He will put your money into your sack's mouth. He may take your Simeon

and bind him before your eyes, but He will give you provision by the way till you get to the goodly land where you shall need no more provision and the Lamb shall be forever with you–and you with Him! The third lesson which we draw from this is that though sometimes the Lord treats His people roughly, more roughly than He does any other people, yet–

III. HE GIVES THEM THE BEST OF THE BARGAIN IN THE LONG RUN.

These, his brothers, were the only ones Joseph spoke roughly to, but they were the only ones upon whose necks he afterwards fell and wept. They were the only ones that made the tears come into his eyes. They were the only ones of whom he said, "I will preserve you alive." They were the only ones for whom he sent the wagons to bring them down, saying, "Regard not your stuff, for the whole land of Egypt is yours." They were the only ones whom he brought in before Pharaoh and said, "Behold my father and my brothers." They were highly favored and they dwelt in the land of Goshen and they had rest. Child of God, you will have the best of it soon! Even now you are the only ones that Christ deigns to call His Brothers and Sisters. You are the only people of whom it is written that you are a people dear to Him. You are the only people for whom Christ prayed, for He said, "I pray not for the world, but for those whom You have given Me out of the world, that they may be one." You are the people for whom all things work together for good. As

many of you as have believed in the Lord Jesus and are resting upon Him for salvation, though your path may be rough and thorny, you are the only people who have God, Himself, to be your Captain, who have His fiery cloudy pillar to be your direction and who shall have the everlasting rest, the eternal portion! Be of good courage. Your riches in reversion are such that you can smile at poverty. Your rest which is yet to come is such that you may well despise the labor which makes you eat your bread in the sweat of your face. Your glory which is to come so excels that you may forget your poverty and your reproach. Your being with Christ will be so superlatively, Divinely blessed, that you may well, for awhile, bear to have a rough word or two from Him–

"Forever with the Lord!

Amen, so let it be!"

When it shall be so, when you are forever with the Lord, if you could be ashamed, you would be ashamed and confounded to think that you ever murmured, or ever entertained a thought of complaint against the kind and gracious God who ordered all things for the best for you to promote your profit and His Glory! May that thought cheer you, you who are depressed and cast down–and may you go on your way rejoicing!

As for such as have never trusted Christ, it often makes my heart bleed when I talk of these things, to think that I cannot speak to them, that I cannot tell them that these comfortable things are

theirs. Oh, unbeliever, you are an alien and a stranger to the privileges of heavenly citizenship! For you there is no blessedness, either now or hereafter! Why will you remain an unbeliever? Why will you continue to be careless and godless, Christless? I trust the Lord has designs of love to you. Leave your sins, for you must either leave them or be lost! Trust the Savior. Rely wholly upon His blood and righteousness, for there is no other righteousness that can ever help you. But if you cast your soul upon Him, it shall be well with you forever! God grant that we may all be found in the day of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, as Brothers and Sisters who are in allegiance to Him. So may it be with you all. Amen.

Ge 42:21 • A New Leaf for the New Year

SERMON 2497

A *New Leaf For The New Year*

"And they said one to another, We are truly guilty concerning our brother."

Genesis 42:21

YOU know the story from which our text is taken, how Joseph's brothers, being envious of him, sold him for a slave, deceived his aged father concerning him and then endeavored to forget the deed. They appear to have gone on with sad consciences for a number of years, but, by-and-by, there was a sore famine in all lands and from all countries people went into Egypt to buy corn. So old Jacob told his sons that they must go down into Egypt to buy from the stores there laid up for the time of famine. And they went, not knowing

that Joseph was there in great power. He knew them and, at first treated them very roughly, charged them with being spies, and put them in prison for three days. Afterwards he said to them, “If you are true men, let one of your brothers be bound in the house of your prison: go you, carry corn for the famine of your houses: but bring your youngest brother to me; so shall your words be verified, and you shall not die.” Then it was, but not till then, that they said, one to another, “We are truly guilty concerning our brother.”

See, from this narrative, how, sometimes, trouble and sorrow bring men to repentance. Personal affliction or bereavement, or trial of one kind or another may be most useful to us by making us think about our own condition in the sight of God, and our actions toward Him as well as with regard to our fellow men. There may be someone in this congregation who has had sore troubles, wave upon wave, affliction upon affliction. It will be a source of eternal gratitude to you, my dear Friend, if your afflictions should make you think of your conduct towards Christ, so that you should be moved to say, “I have been truly guilty concerning my Savior, concerning Him who took upon Himself the form of a Man, that He might be my Brother and might redeem me from going down into the pit.”

I shall limit my discourse to this one topic–in our treatment of Christ, we have all been guilty. And I shall try to press this Truth of God home with a demand, in God’s name, for repentance on

account of the way in which we have dealt with His Son, Jesus Christ, our greater Joseph. I shall be happy if any have come here in trouble, if that trouble should work with my rebuke to stir up their hearts and move them to repentance before God. When a certain man lost his eyesight, that sight being gone deprived him of the power to join in many a merry party and to go on in his former sin. He then began to attend the House of God and there he found the Savior. And he was in the habit, afterwards, of saying that he was always blind while he could see, but after he had lost his sight, then it was that he truly began to see! Theremay be some here who are afflicted, perhaps not exactly as that man was, but in some other way. If so, I hope that they, too, will soon be able to say with the Psalmist, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your Word." It will be a good beginning towards such a blessed consummation if they should now confess that they have been guilty concerning Christ.

I will try to handle my subject in this way. First, let us consider our treatment of Christ. Secondly, let us think ofChrist's treatment of us. What then?

First, let us consider OUR TREATMENT OF CHRIST.

Let us begin by taking ourselves in the mass, without any division of character. How have we and the whole human race treated the Lord Jesus Christ? He came to this earth with love in His heart, with love in His eyes, with love in His hands, with love on His lips,

He was altogether Love Incarnate and when He made His appearance, what was the reception He met with? You kings, have you not a palace for Him who is the King of Kings? Let the purples of Thyatira, let all the dainty damasks of the East be brought forth to wrap the Holy Child Jesus! No, alas, it is not so! There is no palace, nor even a private house that will receive Him as a guest, and even of the place where others might lodge it is written, “there was no room for Him because there is no room for Him in any betterplace! He grows up, but who are His associates? Is He surrounded by the wise? No, they cavil at Him! Do the righteous, or those who pretend to be so, become His disciples? No, these hypocrites are His worst enemies. He finds no associates who love Him except a few poor and humble fishermen–and these have had to have new hearts before they could see any beauty in Him. "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

The world has plenty of music for its greatest murderers–

"

Look, the conquering hero comes,

Sound the trumpets, beat the drums,"

sings the world when it sees the warrior come home with his garments red with the gore of his fellow men! Let him ride through the street in pomp and splendor! Run to your windows, climb to your chimney tops and look down upon the gigantic murderer as he

goes along the streets in triumph. But the world has no songs for the Savior, no pomp, no praise, no acclamations for Him! A few peasants and children once cry, “Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!” But in a day or two that note is changed and, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” is the world’s cry concerning the only Redeemer the world will ever see!

If He had been only treated thus–with derision and shame–it were enough, one would think, to provoke God to dash the world in pieces. But this, alas, was not all. We took the Prince of Glory–yes, we did it, for had we been therewe would have done the same as they did, and we really have done the same in spirit if not in act–we took the Prince of Glory, we scourged Him at the whipping post, we hounded Him through the streets, having no compassion upon Him. We took our sins and drove them like nails through His hands and feet. We lifted Him high up on the Cross of our transgressions and then we pierced His heart through with the spear of our unbelief! This is the treatment that we, Brothers and Sisters, have given to Jesus! Surely, we did well to sing, just now, if the words really came from our hearts as well as from our lips–

“Was it for crimes that I had done
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! Grace unknown!
And love beyond degree.”

You cannot stand, even in imagination, by the Cross of Calvary, and see the writhing body of your Redeemer nailed to the accursed tree, without saying, as you wring your hands in a very agony of sorrow, "Yes, we are truly guilty concerning the Lover of our soul, Christ Jesus, the Friend that sticks closer than a brother."

But now we will divide the house and pick out the Christians, those who know and love the Savior. May I speak for you, dear Friends? I am sure I can say for myself and, I suppose I can also say for you, that we Christians are truly guilty concerning Christ, our Brother. We do love Him. If He should ask each one of us, as He asked Simon Peter, "Do you love Me?" We could, every one of us say, even though it brought tears into our eyes, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."–

"Do not I love You, O my Lord?
Behold my heart and see!
And turn each odious idol out
That dares to rival Thee."

Yet we are truly guilty concerning our Lord, first, because we have exhibited such little faith in Him. Beloved, wemust never put our unbelief of Christ among our little sins, for it is one of the greatest that we can possibly commit! When Mr. Marshall, who wrote a famous treatise on Sanctification, had been, for some years, in great distress of mind, he went to converse with that eminent Divine, Dr. Thomas Goodwin. After he had mentioned a great

many of his sins, Goodwin very pertinently observed, “But, friend Marshall, you have left out the greatest sin of all.” “And what is that, Doctor?” he enquired. “Why,” said the Doctor, “you have left out the great sin of doubting the power of Christ to forgive you all your sins!” Surely, this is a sin of no mean sort, yet these doubts concerning our Savior are very common to us and I am sure He does not deserve them! Is there anything that vexes you more in a friend than for that friend to mistrust you? I must confess that although I can bear many things, this is one of the points upon which I feel very tender. And for me to live with a person who habitually mistrusted me would, I think, be like living in the midst of a Hell upon earth! Yet we treat our Lord Jesus thus! Some of us habitually mistrust Him and the best of us too frequently fall into doubts and fears.

I think I may also speak for you, my Brothers and Sisters, when I say that even concerning temporal affairs we aretruly guilty with regard to our Lord. We often get to fretting and worrying when, if we were but just to our Divine Friend, we would be in peace of mind, leaving all our cares with Him. When Cromwell sent Mr. Bulstrode Whitelocke across to Sweden as his ambassador, he took ship and, the night coming on to be stormy, he sat up in great uneasiness of mind, fretting about the unsettled state of the nation, and thinking that he was living in the worst and most perilous times that men had ever known. But he had a godly valet, and his servant

said to him, “Mr. Whitelocke, how did God govern the world before you were born? Did He manage it all right?” “Oh, yes,” promptly answered Whitelocke, “He managed the world with wisdom.” “And when you are dead, Sir,” asked the valet, “will God be able to manage the world without you?” “Oh, certainly!” replied Whitelocke, “He does not need me.” “Well, then,” said the sensible servant, “don’t you think, Sir, that He is able to manage the affairs of the world with you just as well as He could without you, and would it not be better for you to go to bed and get some sleep? And then, if God spares your life, you may wake up in the morning and do your best, rather than sit here in this state of anxiety and fretfulness.” There was great wisdom in what that man said and many of us need just the lesson that Mr. Whitelocke had to learn. When I think of the way in which we have been running here and there, and forgetting the exceedingly great and precious promises of our everglorious Lord, I must again say that we are truly guilty concerning our Brother.

And, dear Friends, how guilty we have been in the matter of our love to Jesus! Another year is almost gone, let us review it. Have we loved Christ this year as we should have done? Our love, perhaps, can be measured as well by our conversation as by anything. Have we talked much about Jesus Christ? Have we said a good word concerning Him in all company into which we have been drawn? When Mr. John Locke was brought into the company

of two noted philosophers–I believe Buccleuch and Halifax–they began talking a great deal of nonsense and Mr. Locke took out his pencil and pocketbook and commenced to write. One of them asked him what he was doing. “Well,” he replied, “I have been for years desiring to be introduced into the company of such distinguished philosophers as you are, and now that I have that honor I should like to take down all that you say.” This was a well-deserved rebuke and, of course, they then began to speak upon some other topic which might minister to their companion’s edification.

Now, Beloved, have we, when we have been in company, always talked as Christians should talk? The philosopher should speak like a philosopher. Have we, as Christians, spoken like Christians? When Hugh Latimer was being examined as to his faith, he said that he began to speak without any very great care, but presently he heard a pen scratching on some paper and then he knew that, behind the arras, the hangings of the room, there was sitting a man who was taking down all that he said. “Then,” said Latimer, “I endeavored to speak with discretion.” So, dear Friends, we know that there is a God who is preserving every word we have uttered. If the record of the past year could be read out to us just now, would it show that we have talked much of Jesus? I fear that, in many cases, it would rather compel us to say that we have been truly guilty concerning our Brother.

We may measure our love to Him, too, by our service for Him and our sympathy with Him. What have we done forJesus this year? What have some of you given to Him? Take stock of your gifts to the cause of Christ. I know that some of you have given even beyond your means and my Master will amply reward your liberality. But I know, also, that there are some who can talk loudly concerning the things of God, but who never seem to have had enough religion for it to have much effect upon their pockets! I will give but little for your love to Christ if you bring Him no offering as a token of your affection.

Then, have you faithfully served Christ in the matter of soul-winning? The greatest wish of Christ's heart is to win the souls of men. Has that been your highest wish? Has your soul ever longed and panted to be useful to your Lord? Haveyou ever really felt the weight of men's souls upon your heart and conscience? Did you ever fully comprehend these two words–perishing souls? Have you ever understood the meaningof that word, soul, and have you ever been awakened by it to a holy ardor which has expended itself, first, in agonizingprayer, and next in earnest, self-sacrificing effort that you might win the souls of your fellow creatures? In reviewing my own ministry in this place, with the vast opportunities which God has given me, I stand here to confess that I am truly guilty concerning my Brother. Oh, that I had wept more over you dying men! Oh, that I had pleaded with you more passionately! Oh, that I

had more fervently persuaded you, as though God did beseech you by me, to be reconciled to God in Christ Jesus and to lay hold of eternal life! The past is gone beyond recall, but we must confess the sin of it and you, too, dear Friends, must surely make the same confession that I have done. Have you served Christ as you could have desired?Will you not join with me in the humiliating admission, “O Lord, we are truly guilty concerning our Brother”?

Now think, for a minute or two, of anything else in which you have had to do with Christ. Consider, fellow Christians, with regard to communion with your Lord. Have you been as much in fellowship with Christ as you could havewished to be? Have you been often enough under the apple tree in the midst of the woods? Have you eaten all you could of His pleasant fruits? Have you been sitting as much as you might in His banqueting house, under the banner of His love? How stands the record as to your private prayer? Have you wrestled with the Angel of God as you could have wished to do? Have you brought back with you an abundance of treasure from God’s great storehouse, of which He has given you the key? If not, confess that you are truly guilty concerning your Brother! And how about your outward life? Has that been according to the example of Christ? Have your common, everyday actions all been sanctified with the Word of God and prayer? Has your business been done as in the sight of God? Has there been, about the whole of your life, a clear ring, an unmistakable sound,

so that you can say, “To me to live is Christ. I have set the Lord always before me. I honestly endeavor to magnify Him in all my acts”? I am afraid, Brothers and Sisters, that in this matter, also, we shall again have to confess that we are truly guilty concerning our Brother.

Now let us deal for a little while with another class of persons. There are some here, I trust, who have lately been brought to know the Savior. Perhaps it was this morning, or some day last week, when you first saw the Lord. Beloved Friends, you who are beginners in the Divine Life, shall I go back with you in thought and help you to confess your guiltiness towards Christ? I will confess it on my own account. I remember well when I first found Him and I remember, too, the grief I felt that I should ever have treated Him so ill. He loved me and yet I had despised Him. He was always looking upon me, yet I would not look to Him. He was the true Lover of my soul and yet His name had no music in it for me–and His Person had no beauty to my eyes. He was preached to me, yet I did not trust Him. Dear friends pleaded with me to give my heart to Him, yet I chose the world’s pleasures and vanities, and would not seek after Him. He came to me, He knocked at the door of my heart, but I said to Him, “Get You gone.” He knocked again, and yet again, and sometimes I thought of opening my heart to Him, but instead of doing so I barred the door against Him and said, “I will not have this Man to reign over me.”

It was never my sin to curse Him to His face, but that may, perhaps, have been the sin of some of you. You may, possibly, have persecuted His people, despised His Sabbaths, spoken ill of His ministers, left His Word unread, and His Throne of Grace unvisited. Yet all this while He had loved you with an everlasting love, He had bought you with His precious blood, He had determined to make you His Brothers and Sisters and to bring you to His own right hand in Glory, though you had no respect or regard for Him. O dear Friends, as you review the past, I am sure you will need no pressing on my part to make each one of you say, "Ah, indeed, I am truly guilty concerning my Brother." Our unkindness to Christ is one of the things we ought to confess as soon as ever He brings us to His dear feet. He has forgiven it all! He never harbors even half of a hard thought concerning us–and this makes it all the more bitter for us to reflect that we should ever have treated such a Friend so badly. The fact that He has been so kind and generous to us, although so long neglected and despised by us, ought only to deepen the sense of our guilt concerning our Lord.

There are some belonging to another class, here, and they are truly guilty concerning Christ, yet it is of little use for me to talk to them, for Christ, Himself, is nothing to them. There are those even here, I am afraid, to whom the story of a dying Savior is only like an idle tale. Ah, Sinner, if you do not change your note in this life, you will sing another tune, by-and-by! I know you say that you do

not owe Christ anything and that you will not give Him your heart. Ah, Soul, unless Divine Grace shall renew you and give you another mind, your portion will be where the wicked lie–forever banished from all hope. "Well," said an anxious wife to the physician after he had seen her husband, "what do you think of him?" "Well, Madam," he answered, "he certainly is a little better today, but I must not deceive you. He will die, it is only a question of time." That will be true of us all, unless Christ comes again soon.

Sinner, you may never be as strong and healthy as you are today. You may have said to yourself, "I shall not need to think of dying yet." But it is only a question of time and oh, how short that time may be! And then it will be said concerning you, "Yes, he is gone," and we shall ask, "But where is he gone?" And the answer will be, "He is gone where those must go who are guilty concerning Christ, but who will not confess their guilt, who will not believe in Him, who will not trust Him, but who choose to keep their sins and to rely on their own righteousness and prefer the pleasures of this world to all Christ's love and Grace. He despised the Savior's power to save and so, because he would not come to Christ that he might have eternal life, he is gone, not to his rest, but to share the portion of the ungodly in Hell forever and ever." The Lord have mercy upon you, dear Friends, if you are in danger of such a doom, and renew your hearts by His Holy Spirit, for His name's sake!

Thus have I, as it were, brought before you the Truth of the text as it may be applied to the Lord Jesus Christ–and left it to every man and woman's conscience to decide whether they ought not to join us in saying, "We are truly guilty concerning our Brother."

II. Now, in the second place, we will, with great brevity, consider CHRIST'S TREATMENT OF US.

Oh, for an angel's tongue with which to tell this wondrous tale! There is Christ looking down from Heaven and marking all our sin and ill behavior towards Him. He is not weak, for He is very God of very God! He is able to avenge the insults to His name, to cast us off for all our shameful treatment of Him and to make us smart forever under the Divine lash of infinite and inflexible Justice. But how has He treated us?

Ah, Sirs, He has not given us one ill word! Some of us have been for many years living in sin, yet has the Lord JesusChrist said one ill word to us, or against us? No, instead of that, Jesus has put in many a good word for us. The barrentree would have been cut down long ago as a cumberer of the ground, but Jesus pleaded, "Spare it yet another year." That gray-headed sinner would not have been here, now, but that Jesus, that very Jesus whom he despised, has stood between him and the destroying angel, and so he is still allowed to live. Oh, that the goodness of God might lead him to repentance! Our Lord has not pronounced one curse upon

us! He has not said one harsh word to us, but, on the contrary, He has pleaded for us again and again.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you and I have vexed our Master much and grieved Him sorely, yet He has never broken any of His promises to us. Has He ever once failed us in our times of need? Has He ever said, "Get you gone; you are an unprofitable servant and an unfaithful friend"? Oh, no! We have not had a frown from Him, nor a hard word–nothing but love! If He has sometimes chastened us, it has been in love to our souls, that He might unite us more closely to Himself. I am sure that you have no fault to find with your Lord. I marvel at His patience with me. I do not know anything that astonishes me more, next to His redemption of my soul by blood, than this–that He should bear with such a poor unworthy sinner as I am! It astonishes me that He should still go on sanding down such a knotty piece of timber as I am and that He should persevere in making such common clay as I am into a vessel meet for His own royal use! You see, Brothers and Sisters, He has begun with us, and He will not leave off until He has perfected us! He has loved us from eternity and He will not cease to love us through the eternal ages of the future! There have been ten thousand times ten thousand reasons why He might have given us up and cast us away, like broken vessels, yet we know, Beloved, that He will never give us up, but that He will bring us safely Home to be forever with Him in His Glory!

You and I have had nothing but kindness at Christ's hands all these years. O you venerable sires, with your hoaryheads, who have known the Lord for forty, fifty, or even 60 years, speak if you know anything against Him! And you young men in your prime–and you who are serving your Savior in the burden and heat of the day–speak if you know anything against Him! And you matrons and maidens who love Him and seek His company in secret, if He has ever done you an ill turn, or turned His back on you, speak if you know anything against Him! You cannot, for His treatment has been all love and nothing but love! Jesus died and oh, where are the words that can fitly tell this story? Behold, what manner of love is this! "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Jesus rises again, but He rises with the same love in His heart! He ascends to Heaven, but He still pursues the same mighty work that He began while He was here! Up there He is pleading for us, and preparing a heavenly mansion for us, and never ceasing from doing us good with both His hands! Now, surely, when we think of this generous conduct of His towards such undeserving worms as we are, we may well put a deeper emphasis into our confession, "Yes, Lord, yes! We are truly guilty concerning our Brother!"

III. Time flies, or I would have dwelt at greater length upon our Lord's treatment of us. I have merely mentioned it to you in a hurried manner, and now we are to conclude with this question–

WHAT THEN? Thinking first of our treatment of Christ and next of His treatment of us, what then?

As we are so near to another new year, one of the first things for us to do is this–let us who are Christians turn overa new leaf. If we have been guilty concerning our Brother, let us not go on adding sin to sin, but let us endeavor to amend our ways in the sight of God and not be so guilty concerning Christ as we have been. We ought to be humbled in the recollection of our past sin. There was a little boy whose father, to teach him a lesson, told him that every time he did a certain thing that was wrong, a nail should be driven into a post, but that, on every occasion when he did anything that was right and kind, one of those nails should be pulled out. Master Benjamin became exceedingly careful when the post had got well studded with nails and, after a while, they were drawn out, one after another, and soon his father had the pleasure of extracting the last one. He expected to see the lad begin jumping for joy, but, instead of that, the boy stood weeping and his father said to him, “Well, Benny, my boy, you see that all the nails are pulled out now.” “Yes, father,” he sadly answered, “ but the holes are left.”

So now, suppose that next year we should, by the effectual working of the Spirit of God, be so sanctified in our walk and conversation that our besetting sins should be destroyed and that we should be delivered from these sins that we have been confessing, yet, still, the holes of the past evils would be left–and it

is only our Lord Jesus Christ who can fill those holes. It is only His perfect righteousness that can take away every trace of sin and put it out of sight forever. Let those holes, while we look at them and repent over them, spur us forward for the future, but let us not drive the nails in again, let us not crucify the Lord afresh and put Him to an open shame. Beloved, let next year's record, through the Grace of the Holy Spirit, be of a higher and nobler kind than that of any year we have ever lived! Rise, you who have but skimmed the surface of the sea of life, and with eagle wings mount upwards towards the sun! Up there is the true atmosphere for a child of God to breathe! Rise, you who, like the owl and the bat, have dwelt in darkness, and ask of your Lord the eagle eye that can face the sun, for the Christian's dwelling place is in the light! You who have crouched down, like a strong mule between two burdens, rise and speed onward like a war-horse prepared to carry his master into the thick of the fight! "Awake, awake; put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem! Shake yourself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem: loose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion!"

So Beloved, let next year see how God can glorify Himself in the hearts of feeble men and women. This, then, is the message for us Christians–let us turn over a new leaf.

But what about those who are not believers in Jesus? We may say to them that they, also, have been guilty concerning Christ, so, even

before the New Year comes, they, also, should turn over a new leaf, only, in their case, there is neededa new book altogether, for if they merely turn over a new leaf in the old book, it will be quite as blotted as the past leaves have been! O Lord, give them a new book and take away the old one! And then they will be able to turn over a new leaf, indeed! It is no use trying to get your old stony heart patched up and repaired–you must have a new one altogether! May the Lord give you a new heart and a right spirit with which to begin the New Year so soon to dawn!

Further, to those who have been guilty concerning Christ, but who have not repented and trusted Him, and who have not been led to tremble with regard to their condition before Him, let us tell them how terrible is their danger, and how great will be their ruin before long. This next year some of you will die. I am not speaking at haphazard of such avast congregation as this, for out of the six or seven thousand persons present it is absolutely certain that within 12months many will die! I suppose, not less than a hundred. By the natural laws which limit the duration of a generation, in this next year many of us must die. Well, then, if you are not converted. If you have no Savior, it follows as a matter of certainty that within the next year some of you will be in Hell. This is not a matter of question or of chance, but if you do not, by faith, look to the Lord Jesus Christ and lay hold on Him, it is absolutely certain that, before another 12 months shall have gone, and another last

Sabbath-night in the year shall have come, you will be in Hell–with no possibility of escape, shut out forever from the mercy of God, shut in forever with the devil and his angels–and weeping bitter tears which cannot quench the eternal flames of God's just vengeance against sin.

May the Lord sanctify to you these solemn meditations and give you Grace to believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, that you may be saved! Amen.

Ge 42:22 • Do Not Sin Against the Child

SERMON 0840

D*o Not Sin Against The Child*

"Spoke I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child?"

Genesis 42:22

THUS Reuben reminded his brothers of his admonition concerning Joseph–thus would I address you with regard to your own children. I thought it meet, beloved Friends, as our friend, Mr. Hammond, is coming among us to labor for the conversion of the young, that I should, as it were, this morning deliver the preface to his series of services. Perhaps by enlisting the consideration and the affectionate prayers of God's people for the young, I may be doing more to help my friend in his work than it would be possible for me to do by any other means.

Note the words of the text. “Spoke I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child?” The essence of sin lies in its being committed against God. When men are fully convinced that they have disobeyed the Lord, and that this is “the head and front of their offending,” then they are brought to a true perception of the character of sin. Hence David’s penitential Psalm has for its acutest cry, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight.” Yet the sword of sin cuts both ways–it not only contends against God but against His creatures, too. It is a double evil. Like a bursting shell, it scatters evil on every side. Every relationship which we sustain involves duty, and consequently may be perverted into an occasion for sin.

We are no sooner in this world than, as children, we sin against our parents. As members of a family we sin against brothers and sisters, and against playmates and acquaintances. We launch into the outside world, and around our ship sins dash like raging billows. As our various relations are multiplied, our sins also increase. We sin against a husband or against a wife, against a servant or against a master, against a buyer or a seller. On all sides the roots of our soul suck up sin from the earth in which they spread. We sin in public and sin in private. We sin against our poverty and against our wealth. Our evil nature, like the deadly upas tree, distils its venom–the poison of sin drops on all who come under our shadow. As the sea surrounds all shores, so sin beats with

deadly waves upon all connected with our life. Our sin assails both Heaven and earth, time and eternity, great and small, old men and children.

The text calls us to consider one particular form of sin, namely, sinning against a child, and it is of that I intend to speak this morning, looking up to the great Father of spirits that He would teach me to speak aright. First, what is this which has been spoken to us? "Do not sin against the child." Secondly, who said it? And, thirdly, what then?

First–and this will occupy most of our time this morning–WHAT IS THIS WHICH HAS BEEN SAID TO US? "Do not sin against the child." This warning may be suitable for every one of us without exception. Those who are not parents and who are not teachers of the young, are, nevertheless, bound to remember that they are in a commonwealth of which young people make up a very considerable part. Little eyes are so quick to observe the actions of those who are grown up–adults should be careful what they do.

Every man, by his own conduct, is, more or less, educating the rising generation of the nation. If a man acts amiss. If his speech is foul. If his conversation is polluted, he helps to educate children in the school of Belial. If, on the other hand, his ways are right, and, by the Grace of God he is made to act morally and to speak truthfully, he is doing something, unconsciously it may be, but still

he is doing something to train up one for virtue and holiness. The exhalations of our moral conduct sweetens or defiles the general atmosphere of society, and in this, children, as well as others, are partakers.

I would say to every man who is giving full swing to his passions, if nothing else will check you, at any rate pause awhile when yonder fair-haired girls and lisping children are gazing upon you. If you care not for angels, stop for the sake of yon blue-eyed boy. Let not the leprosy of your sin pollute your offspring more than must be. Were you about to utter a lascivious sentence? Withhold it, I pray you, for it is not right that little ears should so soon be desecrated by that which has become common enough to you, but will as yet be shocking to them.

Were you about to blaspheme? Is it not enough to curse your Maker? Why need you bring a second curse upon that harmless little one? Why teach those lips that will be all too ready to learn to speak the hideous word? Man, if any feeling is left in you, respect the purity of childhood and let the presence of youth, if it is not a motive for sanctity, at any rate be a reason for restraint in open sin. Do not sin cruelly and wantonly against the child.

But I would not merely put it in a light which may suit the vilest. You, dear Friend, whoever you may be, owe a service to your neighbor. You are to love him as yourself–and that word, "neighbor," includes all mankind! The bond of the command is not

limited to those who are over 21 and have assumed the responsibilities of manhood. When God wrote this Law He meant it to take in the whole sweep of our race. The religion of Christ is a religion of love to mankind as such–it bids us regard the babe upon its mother's knee as well as the gray-beard leaning upon his staff–to all it speaks of love.

You are bound, therefore, by the universal Law, to have a love towards children. And, as in the first place you are to refrain from doing or saying anything which would injure their morals for this life, so are you bound, as much as lies in you, to do all you can to train them by your own example for excellence and happiness in the path of right. I put forth God's claim and man's claim, this morning, to all of you–a claim from which you cannot escape by any pretense whatever. A claim which cannot be forgotten without sin.

We are all under obligations, both to old and young, to rich and poor, and especially I urge the claims of those who as yet cannot speak for themselves. To each and every child you are under an obligation as a member of the great human family–as a citizen in one great kingdom–to do nothing which may injure, and everything which may promote his future welfare. I summon before you all the host who gather at their mothers' knees, and beseech you by the heart of humanity not to drag these little ones down to Hell!

To the parent the text speaks with a still small voice, to which I trust none of us will be deaf. “Do not sin against the child”–against your own dear child! Yet how many parents do so! If as I now speak, unconverted parents will be compelled to acknowledge the truthfulness of the accusations I shall lay against them, I hope they will be led to deep and true repentance. There are many parents who neglect, altogether, the religious education of their children. Were their children born without souls, they could not be more indifferent to their welfare than they now are! If it were revealed to them that their little ones, when they slept in their coffins, would be as the offspring of dogs and horses which have no hereafter, they could not treat them in a more thoughtless fashion than they now do!

Why, are there not many of you who, when you have sent your children to Sunday school, think you have done all that is to be done for them? And even if this little is neglected, you are content. You never prayed for your babes–how can you? You do not know, yet, what it is to pray for yourselves in sincerity and truth! You never pointed your Samuels and Hannahs to the “Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.” How could you? Your own sin lies upon you unforgiven!

You have never instructed the dear little ones in the danger of rebellion against God and in the necessity of being reconciled to Him through faith in the precious blood of Christ–how can we

expect you to do this while you, yourselves, remain aliens and strangers to the blessed God and have not submitted yourselves to the Gospel of Jesus Christ? I remember a woman who was converted at an advanced age, who had been left years before, a widow with many children. She was a most exemplary, moral, and industrious woman and earned her living by most laborious work. Yet she managed to bring up all her family, and settle them in a suitable manner.

But after her conversion I think I never saw more bitter tears than those which she shed when she said, “I took care to feed them and clothe their bodies, but I never thought of their souls! Alas for me, I knew no better! But alas for them I left the chief thing undone! The other day I spoke to my eldest son about the things of God and he told me religion was all a farce. He did not listen to a word I said. And well,” she said, “might he be an infidel when his mother never said a word by which he could have been led to the Savior.”

Words were spoken by way of comfort to her, but like Rachel, she refused to be comforted because, she said, and said truly, her great opportunity had been thrown away. The best time of effort for a mother had been allowed to pass away unused. Her harvest was passed and her summer was ended–and her children were not saved! Some of you who are now godless, I trust may be brought to the same repentance. But I would have you saved so bitter regret by

being led now to give your hearts to Christ while yet your children are about you.

In speaking to parents I put the charge in the mildest terms and have said that some have done nothing to train their families for the Savior, but graver accusations may be brought. Are there not some here who have done much the other way, much to quench the motions of the Spirit in the juvenile mind? Much to harden the children's hearts and to lull their consciences to sleep? It is a disgraceful fact that many fathers educate their children for the service of Satan. They are the devil's lackeys, introducing their sons into the courts of the Evil One.

When parents take their children to the theater, what can they expect to be the result? When they send them to the beer shop, or let them see their drunkenness, what surer school of vice can they send them to? Parents who teach their children to sing the silly, frivolous and perhaps licentious songs, are sacrificing them to Moloch! Shame is it when from a father's lips the boy hears the first oath and learns the alphabet of blasphemy! There are crowds of parents upon whose head the blood of their children will certainly descend because they have launched them on the sea of life with the rudder set towards the rocks–with a false chart, a deceitful compass–and every other appliance for securing eternal shipwreck.

Doubtless there are some here, unconverted men and women, whose example has already come home to them in the ungrateful conduct of their sons. They have seen their children grow up to be estranged from them. And if they are, therefore, blaming the Providence of God, let them pause awhile and ask themselves whether they ought not rather to blame themselves–are they not reaping according to their sowing? What are our children, for the most part, but what we make them by our training? And if they have grown up like ourselves–and our faults are mirrored in their characters–let us repent in dust and ashes before God!

Never think it a hard law that our sins against our children should recoil upon ourselves. Fathers and mothers who sin against your children, I fear you will be lost, yourselves. But before that doom overtakes you, I pray you remember that you will not perish alone in your iniquity–your household will suffer with you! If you have no care about your own souls, yet think, I pray you, of the little ones entrusted to you. You have some in Heaven whom Sovereign Mercy has caught away from the cradle and the breast that they may sing the praises of God forever. I cannot bear to think that you should drag the others down to the pit of Hell! For your own sake. For their sake, pause awhile–murder not yourown flesh and blood! Repent of your own personal sins and seek mercy at the hands of Jesus that you may from now on never more sin against the child!

If these things come home forcibly to you who are unsaved, much more to Christian parents! Do Christian parents ever sin against their children? We answer, Christian parents are not perfect! They are yet in the body, and have yet to mourn over sins and shortcomings. And so, not condemning you who fear God–for who shall condemn whom Christ has justified?–yet let me, for the awakening of your consciences and to drive you again to the blood of Jesus for pardon, remind you that we, alas, too often do sin against our children! We are under a double responsibility, not only because they are our children, but because God has given us salvation. We are bound, having the light, to give that light to all around us, and bound by other ties to give the light, first, to those who have sprung from our loins.

If we deny our most loving efforts to our own households, we must surely be inhuman! Not only may we not talk of Divine Grace, we can scarcely boast of fulfilling the promptings of Nature itself, if we have no compassion for our children's souls. Yet what do you think–may not our inconsistencies be the reason why our children are not converted? Is the boy compelled to say, "My father hardly believes what he says, or else he would not act as he does"? Do you not think that in many families where the parents are worldly and conformed to the world, it would be a great wonder if the sons and daughters were not ungodly?

Are there not many Christians so busy about making money that they have no time to speak about soul concerns to their children? And if those children were to die, do you think those parents could excuse themselves? If their children died without hope, how would their parents quiet their consciences? Do we, as a rule, pray for our own children as we ought? Do we wrestle with God for them night and day? Do we ever spend an hour, say, in pleading with the Most High that they might live in His sight? And if we have prayed, do we use such efforts for our children as dying beds will make us wish that we had used? Have we spoken personally to them about their salvation? Having done it once, have we repeated it? If we fear that we have not touched the right chord of the heart, have we made up our minds to persevere in affectionate admonitions and earnest entreaties until every one of them shall be saved?

I know that some of you have done so. I rejoice in some fathers and mothers in this congregation, that they do lay themselves out for the conversion of their children. And of these I may also add that, for the most part, they have seen the desire of their hearts. But where there has been no desire, and no prayer, and no effort–if the children die unsaved, what balm can heal the mother's wounds? O you have been baptized into Christ and profess to have put on Christ! O you who claim to love your Lord and Master, what shall we say to you if your sons shall be unchastened like those of Eli, and shall die in their sins? If your sons turn out to be Nadabs and

Abihas and not Samuels, how can we console you if you have not wept over them?

If they rebel like Absalom, who can wonder if their father never poured out his heart before the Lord on their account? Do you expect to reap without sowing, or to gather where you have not planted? Parental care can, alone, preserve household piety, and if that is gone, the pillars of the nation are removed. It is an ill day for any Church when family piety is on the decline. Household religion has been the great defense of England against Popery. Do not tell me of your State-paid clergy and their lofty prelates–give me family prayer and the Pope may curse away as long as he likes! Give us the open Catechism, and the children made to understand it! Give us the Bible read from day to day, and godly parents inculcating Gospel Truths upon their little ones' minds–and we may laugh to scorn all the powers of Pope or Satan!

But once let the family altar be forsaken and let parents forget the natural duty of ordering their households before the Lord, and you may guard the Church as you will, your labor will be in vain! You have cast down her hedges–the bear out of the woods shall waste her! You have taken away the tower of the flock, and when the wolf comes he will find the sheep an easy prey! Christian parents, though I cannot address you this morning as I would, yet with all my heart would I say to you–do not sin against the child by your ill example or by your negligence as to his salvation–but seek of the

Holy Spirit that to your own offspring you may fully discharge the solemn duties which Providence and Grace have thrown upon you.

The text has a word next to teachers, teachers especially of our Sunday schools, though I hold that teachers of weekday schools ought not to consider themselves exempted from seeking the good of the souls entrusted to them. Teachers of Sunday schools, you have voluntarily assumed a position, the responsibility of which is not to be laid aside so long as you continue in the office. I beseech you, do not sin against the child! He comes to you, this afternoon, to learn something weighty and of eternal consequence–do not be dull and uninteresting. Do not talk to him of unimportant matters. Do not be cold and sleepy over your work, but tell him of Jesus lovingly, simply, earnestly. Do not lead him to feel that you have, yourself, no faith in what you teach. Be so earnest that he may see conviction gleaming from your eyes and may soon, in return, feel it flashing into his heart!

Remember, other teachers have been prayerful over their children. They have brought their boys and girls to Jesus, and have won a blessing from the Master–will not you be prayerful, too? If not, it were better for those children that you had never been born, and that some better teacher had been set over them! Do not sin against the child, therefore, by cumbering the ground and occupying a place which might have been far more profitably filled by a more earnest spirit. In the weekday do not sin against the child

by conduct inconsistent with your profession. Do not sin against the child by neglecting him during the six days if you have opportunities for visitation. Seek his good at all times, follow him with your prayers and tears if you cannot with your personal visits and loving words.

As God gives you opportunity, let importunate entreaties and fervent prayers go together–entreaties to him and prayers to God–and who knows, God may give you his soul as a seal to your faithful ministry! Teacher, do not sin against the child by failure in anything to which conscience calls you. I am afraid, in looking back upon our own Sunday school experience, some of us will have to acknowledge that we did sin against the children a great deal–that we made our class rather a school for teaching, reading, and repeating texts and singing hymns than an occasion for aiming at heart-renewal and immediate salvation.

By the way, let me say while I am speaking to teachers, the word is equally applicable to some of you who are not teachers, but ought to be. In many of our Churches the work of teaching the young is left to the very youngest–and advanced Christians usually decline the service. Is this as it should be? I take it that for this work the Church ought to send forth her picked men. If any of you have ability for the teaching of youth and are not using the talent, you are sinning against the child quite as much as if you undertook the work and did not perform it thoroughly. There are schools in

this neighborhood languishing for lack of teachers. We have letters constantly sent to us, “Can you send us help?” and it is a crying shame that in a neighborhood so blessed with the Gospel there should be any Sunday school pining for lack of teachers to instruct the children.

I am told that in some schools near this Tabernacle, there are sometimes 50 or 100 children without teachers! I charge you, men and women who know Christ, while such spheres are before you, do not stand back from them lest it be charged upon you in the Day of Judgment, concerning these little ones, that you withheld from them the Bread of Life and left them to die in the dark!

The text further bears with equal severity upon the preacher. I feel it chides and chastens me. Preaching is full often too obscure for children. The words are too long, the sentences too involved, the matter too mysterious. Well might the sermon be styled like matrimony in the Prayer-Book, “an excellent mystery.” I believe I have, as much as most of my Brothers, sought out simple words and many dear children have heard the Word from me and have been profited, while many others of them delight to come to the Tabernacle to listen to the minister. Still, we who occupy the pulpit do not feed the lambs as we should. We should give them not merely a Word now and then, but if possible the whole discourse should be such as they can understand.

Sacred simplicity should be so cultivated by the ambassador of Christ, that lads and lasses should hear intelligently under a good shepherd, and the least lamb should be able to find food. Is it always so with ministers? I have my confessions to make, and some of my Brothers, if they are ever awakened to a sense of sin about the matter, will have even longer confessions to offer, since in our pulpits we do, too often, sin against the child.

But we must push on. I want the Church of God, and especially this Church, to attend carefully to the next few remarks. When teachers and others are earnest about the conversion of children, and some of them are converted, they then come into relationship with the Church, and too often the Lord's people need the advice, "Do not sin against the child." How can a Church so offend? It can do so by not believing in the conversion of children at all! I am persuaded there are hundreds of Christians who, in their hearts, altogether mistrust the worth of regeneration unless the party born-again is over 16 or 18 years of age! If the inmost thoughts of many professors could be spoken, it would be seen that they are at once suspicious of a conversion if the convert is only 13 years of age, and yet would cheerfully endorse the same conversion if the person were 30 or seventy!

There is a sad respect of persons among us still–a lingering belief that a certain period of years spent in sin must have elapsed before a work can be commenced! And yet, if you were to think, the

conversion of a child is, in itself, no more difficult than the conversion of a full-grown man! With God all things are possible! If it were right to compare two equally Divine works, it should seem to be an easier thing to renew the child than the man! There is less of the dire force of habit to overcome! There is less to forget, less to repent of! Though there is nothing spiritually good in us by nature, yet there is a certain simplicity about the child–a readiness of belief, an absence of cautiousness and questioning–which is exceedingly helpful in receiving the Truth of God.

Where two things are both impossible, except with God, we may draw comparisons. I should really say that the conversion of the child appears to be the simpler work of the two–and how, then, have we come to imagine it not to be so, I can scarcely tell! Surely that same Holy Spirit who can enter into the man of 70, and overcome his sins and make him to become like a little child, can enter, also, into the child and overcome his natural depravity and make him willing, in the day of God's power, and lead him to faith in Jesus!

If salvation had to do with mysterious doctrines hard to be understood. If to be a Christian one needed to comprehend the Hebrew and the Greek languages, we might admit the difficulty of the conversion of little children. But if it is all so simple that he that runs may read, and he that reads may still continue to run–if it is all so plain as to be nothing more than this, "He that believes in the

Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved"–why not a child as capable of faith as a man? And why may it not be as probable that we may see numbers of children converted to God as that numbers of adults may give their allegiance to the faith?

Get rid of this base idea, then, lest you be found sinning against the child! God can save children! He has saved many! He has proved to His unbelieving Church the greatness of His power towards the little ones. Thrust out the thought, then, and expect, from this day forward, that God will save the children as well as others. Having believed that their conversion is possible, when you hear of it, be willing to believe it is so. I do not ask of children that they should be received into the Church without examination. I do not claim for a youngster who declares that he is a Believer in Christ, that he should be received into the Church with any less rigorous examination than any adult. All I ask is that he should not be tormented with needless suspicions and looked upon as an impostor!

Brothers and Sisters, it would be very greatly sinning against children if the moment their little susceptible minds were made to feel terror on account of sin, we should put that down as repentance. Or the moment they felt some joy at the thought of the love of Christ we should assure them that they possessed faith. This would be to educate them in selfdeception. We should not look to find in the young more than in the old. But so far as faith and

repentance are concerned, we must require quite as much. I mean that the same repentance which is necessary in an adult in order to salvation is indispensable in a child.

The faith of God's elect is the same faith in the youth as in the gray-headed man. Nothing short of real repentance and true faith in Christ can save anybody–and there is no difference in age at all in that respect. We ought, therefore, to expect in a child a sincere hatred of sin, a true sense of its evil, a conviction that he cannot save himself and a simple reliance upon the work of Jesus which we expect in any other convert. Less than this will leave young or old short of eternal life. Many say, "We must hope for the best, and we must not expect too much of a child." But I reply we would do that child most serious injury if we taught him to be satisfied with that which is unsatisfactory and to rest anywhere but in the Lord Jesus! We must expect as much, but what I plead for is we must not expect more!

I am sure that there are some ministers and Church members who discourage, at once, any profession of faith from boys and girls. "Oh yes," they say, "it is the morning cloud and the early dew. It will soon pass away." They utter sharp and hard things, which, if Satan needed instruments, would be the very ones to grieve tender hearts! They put on such frowns, and give themselves such lofty airs that humble, timid children shrink back and are to the Church, for many a day, perhaps, kept outside her pale. Let us judge them

righteously, but let us not judge them censoriously. Let us be willing to receive them to Baptism and to the Lord's Table, and when they are received, instead of thinking of them as though they were less valuable than other members, let us count them to be the very pride of the flock!

I hate to hear people say, "They have received a pack of children into the Church." "A pack of children," yes, and if Jesus carries them in His bosom, surely you are not imitating Christ, nor exhibiting much of His spirit when you look down upon them and despise them! To me, one soul is as good as another. I rejoice as much in the addition of the poorest mechanic to this Church as if he were a peer of the realm! I am as grateful to God when I hear of repentance in the young as in the aged, for souls, after all, are not affected in value by rank or age!

Immortal spirits are all priceless, and not to be weighed in the scale with worlds. I pray you, therefore, rejoice if the Spirit of God dwells in the lowly or in the great–in the young or in the old! He is the same Spirit! He makes each renewed person equally His temple–and each saved one is equally a jewel of Christ–dear to the heart of the Eternal Father, beloved by Him who redeemed all His people alike with His most precious blood! Let us not, therefore, as a Church, sin against the child.

II. WHO SAYS THIS TO US? Nature says it first. The instincts of humanity cry, "Do not sin against the child. It is but a child. It is

little–sin not against it." In the sacking of a town, in one of the old bloodthirsty wars, a soldier seized a little child and was about to kill him in very wickedness when the little one cried oat, "O Sir, don't kill me, Sir, I am so little." The appeal saved his life. For the same reason, hurt not your child or teach it evil. It is so little and it is so trustful, that it is treason to lead it astray. Be careful how you behave towards a soul which reposes in you so implicitly. Do not sin against the child. It is your own. You gave it birth. You see your own features in its smiling face. Will you lead your own child to Hell? Will you be the destroyer of your own offspring? You love it. Your heart overflows with affection for your child. Let Divine Grace turn the streams of affection in the channel of wisdom that the immortal nature of your child may receive the benefit.

Experience adds its voice to Nature, "Do not sin against the child." Hundreds of parents have been brought with sorrow to the grave through the natural result of their own failures and trespasses in reference to their children. They taught the lesson of sin and the children, having learned it, practiced it upon their parents. If you would not stuff your pillow with thorns, do not sin against the child. Experience teaches us, too, from its brighter side, the excellence of holy behavior in the household. How often parents have had the reward of well educating their children–how the father has leaned, when he has grown weak upon the son's strong

shoulder–and the mother has found her dearest comfort upon earth in the daughter whom she had trained for Christ!

Experience says, for your own sakes, lest you nurse an adder into your bosom, sin not against the child. And for your own sake, that, as arrows are in the hands of a mighty man, so may your sons and daughters be in later life, sin not against the child. Conscience repeats the same advice. That inward monitor ceases not to remind us of what is due to God and to His peculiar charge, the weak and feeble. Conscience tells us, plainly, that we must not sport with responsibilities so vast. “Take this child and nurse it for me,” said the daughter of Pharaoh to Moses' mother, “and I will give you your wages.” And even so every babe that is cast into our lap by Providence is put there for the same reason–that we may train it for God and obtain a reward of Divine Grace at the last.

The Church adds her voice to that of Conscience. “Do not sin against the child,” for the children are the Church’s hope. Bring them to Christ that He may put His hands upon them and bless them. That they may become the future teachers and preachers, the pillars and defense of Christ’s Church below. Though some of us have lived but a few years in this world, we have lived long enough to see some of our most esteemed non-conforming families seduced by various motives into communion with the world’s religion and the world’s church. The mystery is not at all difficult to solve. The parents grew rich, and though they were still among

us, they were not of us. Pride separated them in spirit, and their sons and daughters were introduced into other society than could be found among the humbler followers of Jesus–to such fashionable company they became united–and now the descendants of Dissenters are among the fiercest revilers of our holy faith!

Better far were it for us to see our children carried to their graves as infants–to be mourned over with the resignation which a sure hope begets–than they should live to forsake the Lord God of their fathers and to pull down what their fathers built up! That the sons of the Puritans should degenerate into Cavaliers! That the sturdy Protestant family should be led away with Puseyism! That the godly sire should be followed by a reckless son is most deplorable–but so it has been in all generations–and so it will be, still, while parents sin against the child.

God himself, speaking from the excellent Glory, this morning, says to each one of His servants here, "Do not sin against the child," and I ask that if no other voice is heard, we may all bow before His Glorious Majesty and ask for Divine Grace to be willing and obedient.

III. Thirdly, having heard the message, WHAT THEN? Only two things. Does not that exhortation startle some of the unconverted and unawakened here? I think if I were as you are, Sir, if I had lived to be 60 years of age and my son had died through drunkenness, or my daughter were at this time living a godless life

and I were unconverted, it would shoot a pang through my heart to think that I should have brought such misery upon them through my neglect of Divine things. A man often hesitates before he will plunge his family into the speculation which he would not shudder at himself. To be damned, yourself, is something terrible– condemned of God, withered and blasted forever with His anger– cast away where hope can never come!

Well, you may gird up your loins and make your brow as brass, and say, "I will even run the risk of that, and beard the Eternal, and defy the fierceness of His wrath," but can you bear to think that your seed will probably fall into the same condemnation? Eyes will peer at you through the smoke of Tophet and shall recognize you– then some such words as these shall be hissed into your ears–"A curse on you, O Man, the author of my miserable being, and the cause of my endless ruin. A curse be on you, and a sevenfold Hell on you, my Sire, and on you, Woman, that gave me birth, for you trained me in the service of Satan and everlasting destruction fell on me through you! O inhuman wretches, to consign your own children to the flames! Fiends that you were, to teach me the ways of vanity and irreligious, both by your example and your precepts."

Ah! Sinner, this will multiply your torments! You shall be dragged down by your own children's hands to lower depths of misery! I pray you stop and think, and if you cannot redeem the mischief which you have already done, yet repent of it! Fly to the

Cross! Be saved yourself, and maybe those of your house who still are spared, may, with yourself, be saved. O that Divine Grace might lead you, like the Philippian jailor, to cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" and then to hear the voice of promise, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house." Oh, if my words could be as flashes of lightning! If every syllable I drop was a flame of fire, I should rejoice, if thoughtless ungodly ones would but turn to God and live!

Does not this command of this morning press upon every Christian here, not alone upbraiding us, but as arousing our laggard energies, exciting us to something more of diligence and effort? Will you not, dear Friends, this afternoon, pray that Mr. Hammond's words may be powerful among the throng of boys and girls? Will it not be a matter of conscience with everyone here that at home you will plead with God for a blessing? And during this week will you not maintain a gracious concert of earnest prayer that the benediction may descend like showers of gracious rain upon these young plants?

Will you not give us your best help if you see any movements of God's Spirit? Will you not join to cheer and to instruct the newborn converts? Will you not consider whether you could not take a class in one of the surrounding Sunday schools? Will you not roll away that reproach which I mentioned just now, which rests upon some of you because there are schools without teachers? Parents, will

you not pray for your children, and even today seek to hold up Jesus before them? Will we not all, God helping us, say within ourselves that we will no longer sin against the child, but in Jesus' name seek to gather His lambs and feed them for Him? Amen.

Ge 42:22 • Do Not Sin Against the Child

SERMON 3237

D*o Not Sin Against The Child*

"And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required."

Genesis 42:22

[A Sermon by C. H. Spurgeon upon the same text is #840, also entitled Do Not Sin Against the Child. It was delivered as a preface to a series of services for children conducted in the Tabernacle in the year 1868, by the late Mr. E. Payson Hammond.]

You know how Joseph's brethren, through envy, sold him into Egypt and how ultimately they were themselves compelled to go down into Egypt to buy com. When they were treated roughly by

the governor of that country, whom they did not know to be their brother, their consciences smote them and they said one, to another, “We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.”

While their consciences were thus accusing them, the voice of their elder brother chimed in, saying, “Said I not unto you, Do not sin against the child?” From which I gather that if we commit sin after being warned, the voice of conscience will be all the more condemning, for it will be supported by the memory of disregarded admonitions, which will revive again, and with solemn voices say to us, “Said we not unto you, Do not sin against the child?”

We who know what is due to children will be far more guilty than others if we sin against their souls. Wiser views as to the needs and hopes of the little ones are now abroad in this world than those which ruled the public mind fifty years ago—and we shall be doubly criminal if now we bring evil upon the little ones.

The advice of Reuben may well be given to all grown-up persons, “Do not sin against the child.” Thus would I speak to every parent, to every elder brother or sister, to every schoolmaster, to every employer, to every man and woman, whether they have families or not, “Do not sin against the child.” Neither against your own child, nor against anybody’s child, nor against the poor waif of the street whom they call, “nobody’s child.”

If you sin against adults, “do not sin against the child.” If a man must be profane, let him have too much reverence for a child to pollute its little ears with blasphemy. If a man must drink, let him have too much respect for childhood to entice his boy to sip at the intoxicating cup. If there is anything of lewdness or coarseness on foot, screen the young child from the sight and hearing of it. O you parents, do not follow trades which will ruin your children, do not select houses where they will be cast into evil society, do not bring depraved persons within your doors to defile them!

For a man to lead others like himself into temptation is bad enough—but to sow the vile seed of vice in hearts that are as yet untainted by any gross, actual sin, is a hideous piece of wickedness. Do not commit spiritual infanticide. For God’s sake, in the name of common humanity, I pray you, if you have any sort of feeling left, do not play the Herod by morally murdering the innocents. I have heard that when, in the cruel sack of a city, a soldier was about to kill a child, his hand was stayed by the little one’s crying out, “O sir, please don’t kill me. I am so little!” The feebleness and littleness of childhood should appeal to the worst of men and restrain them from sinning against the child.

According to the story of Joseph, there are three ways of sinning against the child. The first was contained in the proposition of the envious brothers, “Let us slay him...and we shall see what will become of his dreams.” “Shed no blood,” said Reuben, who had

reasons of his own for wishing to save Joseph's life. There is such a thing as morally and spiritually slaying boys and girls—and here even the Reubens unite with us—even those who are not so good as they should be will join in the earnest protest, "Do not sin against the child"—do not train him in dishonesty, lying, drunkenness, and vice.

No one among us would wish to do so, but it is continually done by bad example. Many sons are ruined by their fathers. Those who gave them birth give them their death. They brought them into the world of sin and they seem intent to bring them into the world of punishment—and will succeed in the fearful attempt unless the grace of God shall interfere.

Many are doing all they can, by their own conduct at home and abroad, to educate their offspring into pests of society and plagues to their country. When I see the number of juvenile criminals, I cannot help asking, "Who slew all these?" And it is sad to have for an answer, "These are mostly the victims of their parents' sin."

The fiercest beasts of prey will not destroy their own young, but sin makes men unnatural, so that they destroy their offspring's souls without thought. To teach a child a lascivious song is unutterably wicked—to introduce him to the wine cup is evil. To take children to places of amusement where everything is polluting —where the quick-witted boy soon spies out vice and learns to be precocious in it—where the girl, while sitting to see the play, has

kindled within her passions which need no fuel—to do this is to act the tempter's part.

Would you poison young hearts and do them lifelong mischief? I wish that the guardian of public morals would put down all open impurity, but if that cannot be, at least let the young be shielded. He who instructs a youth in the vices of the world is a despicable wretch—a panderer for the devil, for whom contempt is a feeling too lenient. No, even though you are yourself of all men most hardened, there can be no need to worry the lambs and offer the babes before the shrine of Moloch.

The same evil may be committed by indoctrinating children with evil teachings. They learn so soon that it is a sad thing to teach them error. It is a dreadful thing when the infidel father sneers at the cross of Christ in the presence of his boy, when he utters horrible things against our blessed Lord in the hearing of tender youth. It is sad to the last degree that those who have been singing holy hymns in the Sabbath school should go home to hear God blasphemed, and to see holy things spit upon and despised. To the very worst unbelievers we might well say—Do not thus ruin your child's immortal soul. If you are yourself resolved to perish, do not drag your child downward too.

But there is a second way of sinning against the child, of which Reuben's own proposition may serve as an illustration. Though not

with a bad motive, Reuben said, “Cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him.”

The idea of many is to leave the child as a child, and then look him up in after days and seek to deliver him from destruction. Do not kill him, but leave him alone till riper years. Do not kill him—that would be wicked murder—but leave him in the wilderness till a more convenient season, when, like Reuben, you hope to come to his rescue. Upon this point I shall touch many more of you than upon the first.

Many professing Christians ignore the multitudes of children around them and act as if there were no such living beings. They may go to Sunday school or not—they do not know and do not care. At any rate, these good people cannot trouble themselves with teaching children. I would earnestly say, “Do not sin against the child by such neglect.” “No,” says Reuben, “we will look after him when he is a man. He is in the pit now, but we are in hopes of getting him out afterwards.”

That is the common notion—that the children are to grow up unconverted—and that they are to be saved in after life. They are to be left in the pit now and to be drawn out by and by. This pernicious notion is sinning against the child. No word of Holy Scripture gives countenance to such a policy of delay and neglect. Neither nature nor grace pleads for it.

It was the complaint of Jeremiah, “Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones: the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.” Let not such a charge lie against any one of us. Our design and object should be that our children, while they are yet children, should be brought to Christ. And I ask those dear brothers and sisters here present who love the Lord not to doubt about the conversion of their little ones, but to seek it at once with all their hearts. Why should our Josephs remain in the pit of nature’s corruption? Let us pray the Lord at once to take them up out of the horrible pit and save them with a great salvation.

There is yet a third way of sinning against the child, which plan was actually tried upon Joseph— they sold him—sold him to the Midianite merchantmen. They offered twenty pieces of silver for him and his brothers readily handed him over for that reward. I am afraid that some are half inclined to do the same now.

It is imagined that now that we have School Boards, we shall not want Sabbath schools so much, but may give over the young to the Secularists. Because the children are to be taught the multiplication table, they will not need to be taught the fear of the Lord! Strange reasoning this! Can geography teach them the way to heaven or arithmetic remove their countless sins? The more of secular knowledge our juveniles acquire, the more will they need to be taught in the fear of the Lord.

To leave our youthful population in the hands of secular teachers will be to sell them to the Ishmaelites. Nor is it less perilous to leave them to the seductive arts of Ritualists and Papists. We who love the Gospel must not let the children slip through our hands into the power of those who would enslave their minds by superstitious dogmas. We sin against the child if we hand it over to teachers of error.

The same selling of the young Josephs can be effected by looking only to their worldly interests and forgetting their souls. A great many parents sell their children by putting them out as apprentices to men of no character, or by placing them in situations where ungodliness is the paramount influence. Frequently the father does not ask where the boy can go on the Sabbath day, and the mother does not inquire whether her girl can hear the Gospel when she gets out—but good wages are looked after and not much else.

They count themselves very staunch if they draw a line at Roman Catholics, but worldliness and even profligacy are not reckoned as barriers in many cases. How many there are of those who call themselves Christians who sell their daughters in marriage to rich men! The men have no religion whatever, but "it is a splendid match," because they move in high society. Young men and women are put into the matrimonial market and disposed of to the highest bidder—God is not thought of in the matter.

Thus the rich depart from the Lord and curse their children quite as much as the poor. I am sure ye would not literally sell your offspring for slaves, and yet to sell their souls is by no means less abominable. “Do not sin against the child.” Do not sell him to the Ishmaelites. “Ah!” you say, “the money is always handy.” Will you take the price of blood? Shall the blood of your children’s souls be on your skirts? I pray you, pause awhile ere you do this.

Sometimes, a child may be sinned against because he is disliked. The excuse for undue harshness and severity is, “He is such a strange child!” You have heard of the cygnet that was hatched in a duck’s nest. Neither duck, nor drake, nor ducklings could make anything out of the ugly bird, and yet, in truth, it was superior to all the rest.

Joseph was the swan in Jacob’s nest, and his brothers and even his father did not understand him. His father rebuked him and said, “Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?” He was not understood by his own kin. I should fancy that he was a most uncomfortable boy to live with, for when his elder brothers transgressed, he felt bound to bring unto his father “their evil report.”

I doubt not that they called him, “a little sneak,” though, indeed, he was a gracious child. His dreams also were very odd and considerably provoking, for he was always the hero of them. His brothers called him “this dreamer,” and evidently thought him to be

a mere fool. He was his father's pet boy and this made him even more obnoxious to the other sons.

Yet that very child, who was so despised by his brothers, was the Joseph among them. History replicates itself, and the difference in your child, which now causes him to be pecked at, may perhaps arise from a superiority which as yet hasn't found its sphere. At any rate, "do not sin against the child," because he is singular, for he may rise to special distinction.

Do not, of course, show him partiality and make him a coat of many colors—because if you do, his brothers will have some excuse for their envy. But on the other hand, do not suffer him to be snubbed and do not allow his spirit to be crushed.

I have known some who, when they have met with a little Joseph, have sinned against him by foolish flattery. The boy has said something rather good, and then they have set him upon the table so that everybody might see him and admire what he had to say, while he was coaxed into repeating his sage observations. Thus the child was made self-conceited, forward, and pert.

Children who are much exhibited are usually spoiled in the operation. I think I hear the proud parents say, "Now do see—do see what a wonderful boy my Harry is!" Yes, I do see. I do see what a wonderful stupid his mother is. I do see how unwise his father is to expose his boy to such peril. Do not sin against the child

by fostering his pride, which, as it is an ill weed, will grow apace of itself.

In many cases, the sin is of quite the opposite character. Contemptuous sneers have chilled many a good desire and ridicule has nipped in the bud many a sincere purpose. Beware of checking youthful enthusiasm for good things. God forbid that you or I should quench one tiny spark of grace in a lad's heart, or destroy a single bud of promise! We believe in the piety of children—let us never speak, or act, or look as if we despised it.

"Do not sin against the child," whoever you may be. Whether you are teacher or parent, take care that, if there is any trace of the little Joseph in your child, even though it be but in his dreams, you do not sin against him by attempting to repress the noble flame which God may be kindling in his soul.

I cannot just now mention the many, many ways in which we may be offending against one of the Lord's little ones, but I would have you recollect that, if the Lord's love should light upon your boy, and he should grow up to be a distinguished servant of the Lord, your conscience will prick you and a voice will say in your soul, "Said I not unto you, Do not sin against the child?"

And if, on the other hand, your child should not become a Joseph, but an Absalom, it will be a horrible thing to be compelled to mingle with your lamentations the overwhelming consciousness that you led your child into the sin by which he became the

dishonor of your family. If I see my child perish and know that he became a reprobate through my ill teaching and example, I shall have to wring my hands with dread remorse and cry, “I slew my child! I slew my child! and when I did it, I knew better, but I disregarded the voice which said to me, ‘Do not sin against the child.’”

Now, dear Sunday school teachers, I will mention one or two matters which concern you. “Do not sin against the child" by coming to your class with a chilly heart. Why should you make your children cold towards divine things? Do not sin against them by coming too late, for that will make them think that punctuality is not a virtue and that the Sunday school is of no very great importance.

“Do not sin against the child” by coming irregularly and absenting yourself at the smallest pretense, for that is distinctly saying to the child, “You can neglect to serve God when you please, for you see that this is what I do.” “Do not sin against the child” by merely going through class routine, without really teaching and instructing. That is the shadow of Sunday school teaching and not the substance—and it is in some respects worse than nothing.

“Do not sin against the child” by merely telling him a number of stories without setting forth the Savior, for that will be giving him a stone instead of bread. “Do not sin against the child” by aiming at

anything short of his conversion to God through Jesus Christ the Savior.

And then, you parents, "do not sin against the child" by being so very soon angry. I have frequently heard grown-up people repeat that verse, "Children, obey your parents in all things." It is a very proper text—a very proper text—and boys and girls should carefully attend to it. I like to hear fathers and mothers preach from it, but there is that other one, you know. There is that other and —"Likewise, ye fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged!"

Do not pick up every little thing against a good child and throw it in his or her teeth, and say, "Ah, if you were a Christian child, you would not do this and you would not do that!" I am not so sure about that—you who are heads of families do a great many wrong things yourselves—and yet I hope you are Christians. And if your Father in heaven were sometimes to be as severe with you as you are with the sincere little ones when you are out of temper, I am afraid it would go very hard with you. Be gentle, and kind, and tender, and loving.

At the same time, do not sin against any child by over-indulgence. Spoiled children are like spoiled fruit—the less we see of them the better. In some families, the master of the house is the youngest boy, though he is not yet big enough to wear knickerbockers. He

manages his mother, and his mother, of course, manages his father, and so, in that way, he rules the whole house.

This is unwise, unnatural, and highly perilous to the pampered child. Keep boys and girls in proper subjection, for they cannot be happy themselves, nor can you be so, unless they are in their places. Do not water your young plants either with vinegar or with syrup. Neither use too much nor too little of rebuke. Seek wisdom of the Lord, and keep the middle of the way.

In a word, “do not sin against the child,” but train it in the way it should go, and bring it to Jesus that He may bless it. Cease not to pray for the child till his young heart is given to the Lord. May the Holy Spirit make you wise to deal with these young immortals! Like plastic clay, they are on the wheel. Oh, that He would teach us how to mold and fashion their characters! Above all, may He put His own hand to the work—and then it will be done indeed!

Ge 42:36 • All These Things: A Sermon with Three Texts

SERMON 0837

"All These Things"—A Sermon With Three Texts

"And Jacob their father said unto them, You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me."

Genesis 42:36

THE Patriarch must use the expression, "ALL THESE THINGS." He had gone through the catalog–there were but three items at the most, and yet nothing narrower than, "All these things are against me" will suit him. Our notation of our trials is very apt to present them in exaggerated number, but when we come to count our mercies, as a usual rule our tendency is to diminish them. We magnify the hosts of our troubles and underestimate the armies of

our benefits. It were well if it were not so, for the habit is most painful to ourselves and dishonorable to God. “All these things,” indeed! And what a little “all” compared with the benefits of God! What an insignificant “all” compared with the sufferings of our Covenant Head! What a trifling “all” compared with the amazing weight of Glory which shall soon be revealed in us!

However, allowing the timorous expression to stand, it shall be my business this morning to show that while, according to the verdict of unbelief, “all these things are against us,” yet there are other lights in which to look upon the multitude of our griefs–lights which shall enable us to perceive their benefit to us, and even to triumph in them through Him that loved us.

Our first text is THE EXCLAMATION OF UNBELIEF–“All these things are against me.” In Jacob’s case it was a very plausible verdict. Joseph he had long lost sight of. Simeon did not return from the journey into Egypt. His sons now requested that Benjamin might be entrusted to their thriftless care–and it might well appear to the anxious father as if, one by one, his children were sinking into untimely graves and that God was dealing severely with him. Even the insinuation by which he ascribed these bereavements to the malice or carelessness of his sons, “You have bereaved me of my children,” had an air of great likelihood thrown around it.

Yet plausible as was the old man’s mournful conclusion, it was not correct, and therefore let us learn to forbear rash judgment and

never, in any case, conclude against the faithfulness of the Lord. There may be peculiarities in our case which look as if the Master had treated us with cruel harshness. There may be thorns of unusual sharpness in our pillow but we must not dream that anger placed them there. We may be pining under a grief which we could not tell into another's ear. It may seem that our lot is singled out and separated for peculiar misery–and therefore it may seem just to conclude, "God has forsaken me. He has turned upon me in His fierce anger, and His loving kindnesses have failed forevermore."

But rest assured, my Brothers and Sisters, that the most plausible is not always the most true, and the most natural is not the most sure. God is and ever must be love to His people. Let nothing disturb you in this belief. Believe not the clearest inferences from His Providence–believe HIM! Let outward circumstances say what they may. Even if your understanding should lead you to doubt the Lord, remember that God is greater than your understanding, that His ways are past finding out, and in the end His dispensations must prove to be wise, loving, and gracious. Yet I can well imagine that souls in distress feel it almost ungenerous to dispute the verdict at which they have arrived–for the evidence appears to be so multiplied and clear.

Sitting alone, silent in your sorrow, crushed out of all hope, you claim the unhappy right to declare, "All these things are against me." And yet, Beloved, it is not so. Jacob's exclamation was most

evidently exaggerated–exaggerated in the term he used, “All these things,” for there were but three evils at the most–exaggerated, too, in most of the bound him before their eyes. But they gave him no reason to believe that Simeon was put to death. The old man jumps to a conclusion for which he has no warrant, and laments because, “Simeon is not.”

He added, “You would take Benjamin away.” Yes, but only to go into Egypt to buy corn–a short and needed journey from which he would soon return. You would suppose, from the Patriarch’s language, that beyond all doubt Simeon had fallen a victim in Egypt, and that Benjamin was demanded with a view to his instant execution! But where was evidence to support this assertion? We frequently talk of our sorrows in language larger than the truth warrants. We write ourselves down as peers in the realms of misery, whereas we do but bear the common burdens of ordinary men. We dream that no others have ever passed along our rugged path, whereas the road is beaten down with the footsteps of the flock.

We imagine that the furnace has been heated seven times hotter for us, whereas, compared with martyrs and the afflicted in all ages, and especially compared with our Master, it is probable that our griefs are of the lighter kind. The exclamation of Jacob was also as absurd as it was exaggerated. It lead him to make a speech which, (however accidentally true), with his information as to his sons was ungenerous, and even worse. He said, “You have bereaved me of

my children." Now, if he really believed that Joseph was torn of beasts, as he appears to have believed, he had no right to assail the brothers with a charge of murder, for it was little else.

In the case of Simeon, the brothers were perfectly innocent–they had nothing whatever to do with Simeon's being bound–it was wrong to accuse them so harshly. In the taking away of Benjamin, though there may have been a jealousy against him as before against Joseph, yet most certainly the brothers were not to blame. They told their father, most correctly, the message which the lord of Egypt had sent to him. It was Joseph who had said, "If you bring not your younger brother with you, by the life of Pharaoh you shall not see my face again." That was no invention of theirs, and it was unjust on the part of the old Patriarch to cast over his sons, who probably loved him very much and were anxious for his welfare, an accusation little short of a charge of triple murder. "You have bereaved me of my children." Oh, cruel words!

Brothers and Sisters, when our griefs are heavy we are apt to accuse our fellows, to be angry with the secondary causes of our suffering and to say things which ought not to be said by the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus! A dog will bite the stick with which you strike him, but if he had sense he would see how little the secondary cause has to do with it. And so we, oftentimes, are provoked against the person through whom we are troubled, whereas, after all, the rod is wielded by the hand of God, and He is

the true source of affliction! If you drink of the river of affliction near its outfall, it is brackish and offensive to the taste. But if you will trace it to its Source, where it rises at the foot of the Throne of God, you will find its waters to be sweet and health-giving.

Even the waters of affliction, when they are tasted at the wellhead, are sweet with Divine love. But if you follow them along the miry channels of secondary causes and instrumentalities, you will perceive a bitterness in them creating envy, malice, and all uncharitableness within you. Jacob was, in the expression before us, even bitter towards God! There is not a word like submission in the sentence, nothing of resignation, nothing of confidence. He knew very well that all things came from God, and, in effect he declares that God is, in all these things, fighting against him. God forbid that these tongues, which owe their power to speak to the great God, should ever pervert their powers to slandering Him! And yet if our tongues have not spoken unbelievingly, how often our hearts have done so!

We have said, “Why has God dealt thus with me? Why are His strokes so multiplied? And why are my wounds so blue? Oh, why am I thus chastised? Why does He put cross upon cross upon my galled shoulders and crush me into the dust with heaviness of sorrow?” Peace, child of God, peace! Your Father loves you–love Him in return–and let your love assure you that it is not possible for Him to measure out to you a drachma of sorrow more than is

needed, nor a grain of bitterness more than your soul absolutely requires for its spiritual health! The exclamation, then, of Jacob was sadly bitter, both towards God and man. If it had not been for unbelief it had never dishonored his lips.

Observe that this speech was rather carnal than spiritual. You see more of human affections than of Divine Graceworked faith–more of the calculator than the Believer–more of Jacob than of Israel. Jacob is more the man and less the man of God than we might have expected him to have been. See how he dwells upon his bereavements! "Joseph," that dear name, as it brought up the beloved Rachel before his mind, wrung the old man's heart. "Joseph is not." Alas, that wound was still bleeding! Then, "Simeon is not." The reckless, daring, valorous Simeon is fallen in the stranger's land! Then, worst of all, Benjamin, the dear name intertwined with the saddest of his funerals–the mother's "Benoni," and the father's, "Benjamin"–the last and dearest must be taken away.

You see it is the father all through–the loving parent thinking only of his children–the natural affections predominating. You see nothing here of the grandeur of faith, nothing of the nobility of Job when he said, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Here we meet with no such question as that of the Patriarch of Uz–"Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not, also, receive evil?" Jacob

acts like a wayward child, vexed and out of temper, crying against its father. He manifests a petulant spirit tempted by the natural promptings of the flesh to rebel against God.

For awhile the work of the Spirit was beclouded and eclipsed in that venerable man of God. And so, Brethren, we, also, must set ourselves upon our watchtower lest by any means we suffer even the allowable affections of the flesh to overshadow our spirit and dim the luster of the work of Divine Grace. Jesus wept, and therefore we may weep. Sorrow is licensed by the Redeemer's example. Our Lord was no stoic, and He would not have His people restrain natural emotions. We are bound to sorrow when we are afflicted and chastened of the Lord. But though Jesus wept, He did not murmur. Though He sorrowed, yet He did not repine. There is a boundary beyond which our mourning must not pass.

Jacob might well have said, "Joseph is not. Simeon is a prisoner and Benjamin is to be taken away from me. The cup is bitter, and if it is possible, O Lord, let it pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but Yours be done." And then he might have burst into a flood of tears and there would have been no sin in it all, but much of sacred tenderness. But he went too far–his natural affections, instead of taking their proper place, usurped the place in which faith should have sat supreme. He did not merely give his feelings vent, but mastery. He not only wept, but salted his tears with murmuring. And this was an evil thing.

Notice, dear Brothers and Sisters, in the case before us, the Patriarch's unbelieving observation was quite unwarranted by his past history. He had been a man of troubles from his youth up. He fled from his father's house to be an exile. He laid himself down with a stone for his pillow and the hedges for his curtains–but with the angels for his watchers. And did he find the solitude of Luz and the desolation of that lonely place to be against him? Ah, no! He dreamed that matchless dream in which a ladder was set between earth and Heaven, and the Covenant God appeared to him and made a Covenant with him and sent him on his way rejoicing! Could Jacob think of Bethel, and say, "All these things are against me"?

And when afterwards, more memorable still, he came back with his wives and those very children over whom he now grieves, did not Jehovah preserve him? Could he forget Peniel and the place where he wrestled and prevailed at the brook Jabbok? Could he forget an infuriated brother with a band of 400 men sworn to take his life come to destroy him–and a brother justly incensed–against whom Jacob had done a great wrong? Esau was then close upon him to strike the mother with the children–did Jacob, then, find that all things were against him? Did not Esau fall upon his neck and kiss him? Did not God deliver His servant? And so, again, at Shechem, when the nations of the land would have avenged the blood of the Shechemites who had been so treacherously slain by

his sons. Did not the Lord bade them touch not His anointed and do His Prophet no harm? And did not Jacob walk in safety among tribes thirsty for his blood?

Thus, looking back upon the past and remembering the Covenant which God had made with him, it was not consistent that Jacob should speak as he did. It was more consistent with the past to have said, “Out of this difficulty I shall arise, for the Lord is with me.” It was consistent with his past experience for him to have commanded his sons, “Whatsoever the Lord does, let us accept it at His hands, for He has not forsaken us in the past, neither will He desert us in days to come.” That would have been faith! But oh, how often you and I forget the steps already trod–and all the mercies which attended them–and fear that God will forsake us and become our enemy!

The Ebenezers which we have raised, do they count for nothing? His love in times past, has that no argument in it for the present and for the future? Will we not say with David, “Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice”? He has been with us in 10 troubles–can we not trust Him for the eleventh? We went through fire and water. Men did ride over our heads. Yet He brought us out into a wealthy place and set our feet in a large room, and can we not rely upon Him now that new difficulties obstruct our path? Yes, Beloved, we will learn from the past, for the lesson of our experience is that the Lord has not

forsaken them that trust Him, and they that wait upon Him shall never be ashamed or confused, world without end.

Still keeping to Jacob's exclamation, let me observe that it was altogether erroneous. Not a syllable that he spoke was absolutely true. "Joseph is not." And yet, poor Jacob, Joseph is! You think the beasts have devoured him, but he is ruler over all the land of Egypt–and you shall kiss his cheeks before long. "Simeon is not." Wrong again, good father, for Simeon is alive, though for his good, to cool his hot and headlong spirit, Joseph has laid him by the heels a little. He had been much too furious in killing the Shechemites and in other deeds of blood. Joseph knows this and is doing his brother a service that may change his character through life by keeping him a little while in captivity!

And as to Benjamin, whom you say they wish to take away–he is to go and see his brother, Joseph, who longs to embrace him and will return him to you in peace. Not one of all these things is against you. Joseph is sent to Egypt to feed you in the famine and to cherish you in your old age–so as to make your last days your best days–and to save the house of Israel, and in fact, all the nations of the earth, alive! As for Simeon, good comes out of that, and that is not against you. And as for Benjamin, he shall be preserved to you, and you, too, shall go down and dwell in the land and rejoice exceedingly. Everything is for you!

Now, usually, our unbelief is a great liar. Our best things are reckoned by unbelief to be our worst. God sends His mercies to us in black envelopes, and we sit down crying over their dismal covering and dare not open the letter and read the heavenly news written within! The Lord sends His blessings in rumbling wagons, and we are so frightened at the sound as almost to lose the choice contents. Well does the hymn put it–

"You fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."

Our best days have been those which we thought our worst. Probably we are never so much in prosperity as when plunged in adversity. No summer days contribute so much to the healthy growth of our souls as those sharp wintry nights which are so trying to us. We fear that we are being destroyed, and our inner life is at that moment being most effectually preserved. Oh, if we read them aright, all things are for us! We are a thousand fools in one to be quibbling at the Divine dispensation, and saying, "All these things are against me."

Jacob was wrong in every jot and tittle of what he said, and so usually are we. Being wrong in judgment, the good old man was led to unwise acting and speaking, for he said, "My son shall not go down with you." He would not yield to his sons. He was

determined that Benjamin should not leave him. Simeon he seemed content to leave in prison, although he ought to have sent his sons back in the hope of bringing their poor brother out of bondage. And he ought to have been willing to run the risk of losing Benjamin rather than to have all the rest of his family die of starvation. But the old man resolutely sets his face and perhaps stamps his foot, and tells them, "No!" Never with his consent should Benjamin be trusted with them. And to this resolve he stands until they are nearly starving, and then he says, "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

The unbelieving generally do stupid things. We conclude that God is against us and then we act in such a way as to bring troubles upon ourselves which otherwise would not have come. To stand still and see the salvation of God is a grand position for a believing soul, but to run headlong–cloud or no cloud, guide or no guide–is to fall into the ditch, to lose ourselves in the dark woods and to bring upon ourselves unnumbered ills. Let us take heed of unbelief, since it confuses the judgment and dishonors God. And notice, once more, that good old Jacob lived to find, in actual experience, that he had been wrong from beginning to end. We do not all live to see what fools we have been, but Jacob did. I wonder, when the wagons came and he was quite sure they came from Joseph, what he thought of that speech, "All these things are against me"?

And when he came to Egypt, and Joseph came to meet him, and they fell upon each other's necks–I wonder whether it did not half choke him to think, "I once said, 'all these things are against me.' " When the old soul went tottering about the land of Goshen, leaning on his staff, with his mind full of all the glory of his darling Joseph. When he was enjoying a brilliant old age, at last. When he saw, day by day, how Joseph was honored, and how great he was, I think he must often have sought out a little corner to weep in and to confess, "Lord, how wicked was I to say, 'All these things are against me,' when I have lived to see You dealing with me with a Father's tenderness, and with the wisdom and loving kindness of a gracious God."

If we are not, in this world, permitted to see the good results of all our troubles, at any rate we shall behold them in the next. And if such things as tears of joy will be allowed on the other side of the river, some of us will shed abundance of them! Oh, if regrets might mingle there, how we shall regret that we rashly anticipated the results of Divine action and were so unwise as to misinterpret the Master's mind! At any rate, we will string our harps to noble tunes and this shall be the part of our celestial minstrelsy, "The Lord lives, and blessed be our Rock who out of much tribulation has brought His servants, and through their tribulation has helped them to obtain the victory and to enter into their eternal rest." Thus much upon the exclamation of unbelief, for higher themes await us.

II. Turn now to the 38 th

chapter of Isaiah, and the 16

thverse, where you have THE PHILOSOPHY OFEXPERIENCE. “O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit.” Unbelief says, “All these things are against me.” Enlightened experience says, “In all these things is the life of my spirit.” The passage is taken from the prayer of Hezekiah after he was raised from his sick bed. He describes the bitterness of his soul in his chattering, like the crane or the swallow, but he comes to the conclusion that all these trials and afflictions and approaches to the gates of the grave made up the life of mortal men–and that by them the life of their spirit is served!

Beloved, this is a great and instructive Truth of God. Our spirits, under God, live by passing through the sorrows of the present, for first, let me remind you that by these trials and afflictions we live because they are medicinal. There are spiritual diseases which would corrupt our spirit if not checked, kept down and destroyed as to their reigning power by the daily cross which the Lord lays upon our shoulders. Just as the fever must be held in check by the bitter draught of quinine, so must the bitter cup of affliction rebuke our rising pride and worldliness. We would exalt ourselves above measure, and provoke the Lord to jealousy against us, were it not that trouble lays us low.

None of us shall know, until we read our biography in the light of Heaven, from what inbred sins, foul corruptions, damnable filth and detestable lusts we have been delivered by being driven again and again along the fiery road of affliction. Adversities are the sharp knives with which God does cut from us the deadly ulcers of our sins–these are the two-edged swords with which He slays our enemies and His own which lurk within us. He must prune us and trim us as the gardener his trees, otherwise we shall bring forth no fruit. Therefore by all these things which Jacob declared to be against him, we find the life of our spirit wisely protected.

Afflictions, again, are stimulates. We are all apt to grow slothful. I know not whether it is so with all Believers, but we of gross and bilious temperament find ourselves oppressed by the spirit of slumbering. But personal sickness, or relative grief, (which is sharper, still), or serious pecuniary losses–these things stir our sluggish blood and make our hearts beat at a healthier rate. There is an old story in the Greek annals, of a soldier under Antignous who had a disease about him, an extremely painful one, likely to bring him soon to the grave. Always first in the ranks was this soldier, and in the hottest part of the fray he was always to be seen leading the van. He was the bravest of the brave because his pain prompted him to fight that he might forget it.

He feared not death because he knew that in any case he had not long to live. Antignous, who greatly admired the valor of his

soldier, finding out that he suffered from a disease, had him cured by one of the most eminent physicians of the day. But alas, from that moment the warrior was absent from the front of the battle! He now sought his ease, for, as he remarked to his companions, he had something worth living for–health, home, family, and other comforts–and he would not risk his life, now, as before.

So when our troubles are many, we are made courageous in serving our God. We feel that we have nothing to live for in this world and we are driven by hope of the world to come to exhibit zeal, self-denial, and industry. But how often is it otherwise in better times? Then the joys and pleasures of this world make it hard for us to remember the world to come and we sink into inglorious ease. Master, we thank You for our griefs, for they have quickened us. We bless You for winds and waves, for these have driven us away from treacherous shores. Before we were afflicted we went astray, but now have we kept Your Word, by Your Grace.

Trials and troubles touch the life of our spirit because their endurance is strengthening. They have the same effect upon the spiritual man as athletic exercises upon the wrestlers of old. If men would win honor in the Greek games, they denied themselves all luxuries and passed through severe ordeals by which their sinews and muscles were developed. And so the Lord puts His children through severe training that He may develop their manhood–that their patience may learn to endure hardness–that their faith may

learn steadfastness. Rough winds root the oaks, so our afflictions confirm us in the promises of God. We had been babes forever, and never have been able to walk alone if the Lord had not put us on our feet and allowed us to fall again and again–each time to rise stronger, acquiring the art of walking by our bruises and broken knees.

Our troubles are a great educational process. We are at school now, and are not yet fully instructed. What little we know, we scarcely know. And what we have learned is so little that we are, most of us, only in our A, B, Cs. Yet, we cannot read words of one syllable, and it is right that we should continue at school till we are made meet to enter into the loftier company beyond the stars. Now, who learns so well anywhere as on the sick bed, or in the midst of tribulation? I tell you, Sirs, there are days in a man's life when he learns more in an hour than in 70 years of ease. I shall not give instances, but there have been such days to some of us, of late, and may the Lord make us wiser thereby!

Blessed is the man who is thus corrected and instructed–to whom the Master opens up the Word, and the heart, and the promise by fire-light shed from the furnace. The rod is a great teacher. I do not know whether boys always need the rod to make them learn, but I am sure men do. And some of us have skin so thick that we need to be struck everyday. As David puts it, "All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning," as if he never began the

day without his whipping, and never passed through without a repetition of the scourging. We must take up our cross daily if we would be disciples of Jesus.

So, too, trials and tribulations are the life of our spirit because they are preparative for that higher life in which the spirit shall truly live. Jacob would hardly have been fit for the luxury of Egypt if he had not been trained by his griefs. That happy period before his death, in which he dwelt in perfect ease and peace, at the close of which, leaning upon his staff, he bore such a blessed testimony to the faithfulness of God–he would not have been fit to enjoy it–it would have been disastrous to him if he had not been prepared for it by the sorrows of Succoth. So we shall be made meet to be partakers in the inheritance in light by traversing the wilderness before reaching the promised land.

This is the place for washing our robes–yonder is the place for wearing them! This is the place for tuning our harps, and discord is inevitable to that work–but yonder is the abode of unbroken harmony! We fret and grieve and vex ourselves today, but by-and-by we shall rest in happiness unbroken! Let us have courage! The end will more than repay us for the toil of the means, and the rest shall make up for the labor of the way. Be of good comfort, and instead, from now on, of concluding that outward trials are against you, agree with Hezekiah in this wise sentence, “By these things men live.”

Let me only detain you one minute, to ask you whether, in looking back upon your life, are you not compelled to feel that the best parts of your character have been produced in you by your troubles? Have not your noblest actions been worked by you in adversity? You had not been, today, what you are, nor where you are, nor on the road to Heaven as you now are, if you had not been afflicted. How much we owe to the anvil and the hammer! Would you alter your trials, now, if you could? You would have arranged your lot very differently sometime ago–but would you now? Even at this distance, too short to get the full perspective, and to understand it thoroughly–would you have your life changed?

I know you say devoutly, "Goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. Every dark and bending line has met in the center of immutable love." Well, then, if it has been so until now, do you think the Lord is about to change? Do you imagine that He gives His best first? Is it not always His rule to keep the best wine until the last? Oh, how it has cheered and comforted me of late to think that I have always found my God to be most good to me, and if possible–after many sharp trials, He seems to have been better! Of late He has seemed more kind and gracious to me than at the first–and so it shall be to the end. He cannot alter! He cannot deny Himself!

So let us sweep the furrows from our brow and wipe the tears from our eyes! Jesus goes before us and the Spirit is with us. All

things shall not be against us, but in them all shall be the life of our spirit, and our lasting good shall be the outgrowth of all.

III. I close with my third text, and I think you may almost guess it, it tells of THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH. Turn now to the 8 th verse. “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that lovedus.” “All these things are against us.” Very well, we could not conquer them if they were not against us–but they are the life of our spirit–and as Samson found honey in the lion, so we, though these things roar upon us, shall find food within them!

Trials threaten our death, but they promote our life. I want you to be sure to notice the uniform expression, “All these things are against us.” “In all these things is the life of my spirit,” and now, “in all these things we are more than conquerors.” The list is just as comprehensive in the best text as in the worst. No, poor Jacob’s, “All these things” only referred to three. But look at Paul’s list: tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword–the list is longer, darker, blacker, fiercer, sterner–but still we triumph, “In all these things we are more than conquerors.”

Observe, then, that the believing Christian enjoys present triumph over all his troubles. It is not, “We shall be more than conquerors,” but, “We are.” “We are today.” As afflictions come we conquer them and before they come we overcome them. Over anticipated trouble, Faith wins a glorious victory. She believes that when trial comes it shall work her good, and so the bitterness thereof is gone

forever, swallowed up in victory. When the trial comes she meets it as a conquered enemy, and after it is over she looks upon it as what she did foreknow, for she counted it not a strange thing when the fiery trial overtook her.

We are conquerors, Brothers and Sisters, at this very hour! We often talk of the crown which we are to wear, but we are kings and priests unto our God even now! He has crowned us with loving kindness and tender mercies. We say, "One day, thank God, I shall be able to rejoice in these troubles," but Faith rejoices in them now. We rejoice in deep distress, leaning on all-sufficient Grace. To come out of the furnace and walk calmly is nothing. To walk in the furnace with the Son of God–this is the miracle! To sing after you have left the bed of pain is nothing. To sing God's highest praises on the bed of sickness is the music that glorifies Him–and by faith we mean to excel in it!

It is no small thing to see the dearest one you have on earth struck before you, and yet to bless the Lord. And when adversity comes, still to praise Him. And when sickness follows, still to let the note rise higher. And when death draws near, to lift the song yet more high, and be more exultant, still. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." I tell you, the praise God receives from His poor bereaved or sick children is much sweeter than anything which ascends from angels, from cherubim and seraphim! Who would not praise the Master when He scatters, liberally, His daily favors? The

devil found an opportunity for speaking against Job from that very thing. He said, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not set a hedge about him and all that he has? But put forth, now, Your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face.”

And God is so pleased with the praise He gets from His children when their bone and flesh are touched, that He said, “He is in your hand, only save his life.” What glorious music it was when Job said, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him”! It rolled up into Jehovah’s ear with a sweetness such as cherubim and seraphim never could have yielded. What a glorious conqueror Job was in the very midst of his worst griefs! It was not that he received twice as much as before–that was not the greatest triumph. The triumph was that while in adversity he said, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” May we have such faith as that, to be now, “in all these things more than conquerors.”

What does Paul mean by saying that Believers are more than conquerors? Is it not this, that with the conqueror there is a time when his triumph is in jeopardy? But it is never so with the Believer! He grasps the victory at once by an act of faith. No “ifs,” “buts,” “perhaps,” for him! He is conqueror at once, for God is on his side. A conqueror, too, who wins by a battle and suffers by the battle. He has to endure wounds, and toil, and faintness–but by all our troubles we are not sufferers but gainers. It is not merely the

reward of the suffering which is good, but the suffering, itself, works patience, and patience experience. Brothers and Sisters, if a wise Christian had his choice, he would not choose the silken joys of prosperity and uninterrupted happiness because such a thing is poverty. Our sufferings and griefs, and losses, and crosses bring with them inevitably, through Divine Grace, an abundant wealth!

I hear some Brethren rejoicing that perhaps the Lord will come, and therefore they will not die. I would sooner die, had I my choice. I see no comfort in the hope of not dying. "They that are alive and remain shall not prevent them that are asleep." They shall not have preference over them that die. And, indeed, it is written, "The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." So that some kind of priority is even allotted to the dead in Christ. If I die not I shall have lost what thousands will have who die, namely, actual fellowship with Christ in the grave.

Let me have it, let me have it, my sweet Lord! Let me wear the clay-cold shape of death that once was Yours and sleep within the sepulcher as You did! To die and rise again, and be with You forever is to complete the circle of the perfect! Those who think that to be alive when He comes will be so great a glory, will perhaps find it no such great thing compared with death and resurrection in the likeness of the Lord Jesus. As the warrior of the

olden time dreaded peace and longed for the garment rolled in blood, so may the Believers rejoice in afflictions. As before the engagement the captain stimulates his soldiers by reminding them that, “the sterner the warfare the greater the honor,” even so may we nerve our spirits.

“Gentlemen in England now in bed will think themselves accursed that they were not here, and hold their valor cheap that went not with us on this glorious day”–so spoke the hero–and so let us, also, welcome persecution and tribulation! We should hold ourselves defrauded of honor if we avoided tribulation! We should look upon ourselves as being so far impoverished for eternity in being spared affliction upon earth–up yonder to relate the triumphs of Divine Grace in us–to tell of the faithfulness of God in poverty and affliction. To make known to principalities and powers forever the wonderful and eternal love of God as we have discovered it in the furnace and amidst the flames! This will be everlasting wealth for which we may be grateful, now, that God is putting us in the way of gaining it. So that in these things we are more than conquerors, since to the conqueror it is a disadvantage to fight, but to us, even the fight itself is an advantage over and above the victory.

But see how this last text of mine opens up the great source of comfort. “We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” Did you notice Jacob said nothing about Him that loved us?

No, he could not have been unbelieving if he had thought of Him. And the life of our spirit in trouble very much lies in remembering Him that loved us. It is through Him we conquer because He has conquered! I think I see Him at this instant wearing the crown of thorns, His hands still ruby with the marks of the nails and His heart all opened with the spear. And He says to me and to His servants, "Children, I am with you. You are filling up in your bodies that which is behind of My sufferings for My body's sake, which is the Church. Be conformed to Me. Ask patience, and I will give it to you. Ask the Spirit's help and you shall receive it. And after you have suffered awhile you shall be with Me where I am, to behold My Glory."

Brethren, here is our joy, indeed! Now the furnace grows cool, for He is at our side. The lake of trouble tossed with tempest becomes a sheet of glass, for He walks the billows, and we hear Him say, "It is I." The winds are hushed, and the coolest, softest zephyrs fan our cheeks while yet, again, He says, "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me." "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you." "In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." The Lord bless you, my tried Brethren, in all these things, for His name's sake. Amen.

Ge 45:1-5 • Jesus and His Brethren

SERMON 2516

Jesus And His Brethren

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him, and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; does my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me here: for God did send me before you to preserve life."

Genesis 45:1-5

I NEED not say to you, Beloved, who are conversant with Scripture, that there is scarcely any personal type in the Old Testament which is more clearly and fully a portrait of our Lord Jesus Christ than is the type of Joseph. You may run the parallel between Joseph and Jesus in very many directions, yet you need never strain the narrative so even much as once. I am not about to attempt that task on the present occasion, but I am going to take this memorable portion of the biography of Joseph and show you how, in making himself known to his brethren, he was a type of our Lord revealing himself to us.

It seems that, at last, Joseph could bear the suspense no longer. He knew who his brethren were, he knew which was Benjamin and which was Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah and the rest, and he remembered all the story of their early days together. But they did not know him. They thought him some mysterious potentate, some great ruler of the land of Egypt–as indeed he was–but they did not know so much about him as he knew about them. Consequently, there was a distance between him and them and his loving heart ached to bridge that gulf by manifesting himself to them. It is the way of love to desire to make itself known.

Now, in a still higher sense, the Lord Jesus Christ knows all about those in this place whom He has redeemed with His precious blood. The Father gave them to Him from before the foundation of

the world and He took them into Covenant relationship with Himself before the earth was. Often has He thought of these as His beloved ones. His delights have been with the sons of men and He has looked forward and foreseen all that would happen to them. Ever since these redeemed and chosen ones have been born into the world, He has watched them so carefully that He has counted the very hairs on their heads! They are so precious to Him, as the purchase of His heart's blood, that they have never taken a single wandering step that His eyes have tracked the mazes of their lives. He knows them altogether–knows their sins, knows their sorrows, knows their ignorance of Him, knows how, sometimes, that ignorance has been willful and they have continued in the dark when they might have walked in the Light of God–and now, at this moment, speaking after the manner of men, the heart of Christ aches to manifest Himself to some of them! He wants to be known. He thirsts to be known. He can only be loved as He is known and He pines for love and so He pines to manifest Himself to His loved ones!

Yes, and there are some of them who know Him already, in a measure, but their measure is a very little one. It is but as a drop compared with the great deep sea. I have been praying and am still praying, and I am not alone in the prayer, that this very hour the Lord Jesus may be pleased to manifest Himself to His own blood-bought ones! To all who have been already called by His Grace and

to many not yet called to Him, may He come in the fullness of His own glorious revelation and make Himself known! For know you not this–that the revelation of Christ in the Word will not save you unless Christ is revealed in you and to you personally? No, more than that–the Christ born at Bethlehem will not saveyou unless that Christ is formed in you the hope of Glory–He must Himself come to you and make Himself known to you. It will not suffice you to read about His healing the sick. He must touch you with His hand or you must touch the hem of His garment with your hand. Somehow there must be personal contract between yourself and the Lord JesusChrist, or else all that He did will mean nothing to you. Let this be our prayer now–that to each man and woman and child here the Lord may graciously make Himself known.

Notice, first, that THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, LIKE JOSEPH, REVEALS HIMSELF IN PRIVATE FOR THE MOST PART.

Joseph cried, “Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.” It would not have been seemly for this great ruler to lose all command of himself in the presence of the Egyptians. His heart was carried away with love to his brothers and the cry that he lifted up was so loud that the people in other parts of the palace could hear that something strange was going on! But he could not bear that they should all stand around and gaze with curious eyes upon their ruler as he revealed himself to his brothers. They would not

have understood it. They might have misrepresented it. At any rate, he could not bear that the scene of affection which was now to be enacted should be witnessed by strangers, so he cried, “Cause every man to go out from me.”

My dear Friends, do you really want to see and know the Lord Jesus Christ savingly? Have you ever beheld Him by the eye of faith? Then, permit be to exhort you to be literally much alone–searching the Scriptures–and much alone in private, secret prayer. That gracious revelation of Himself to you as bearing your sins and putting away your guilt, will nor be likely to come to you until you get a little time in private, where you can quietly meditate upon your Lord and His great atoning work. The mischief of this busy London is that we are fretted and worn with incessant occupations–we would, all of us, be much stronger and better if we saw less of the faces of men and more of the face of God. But for a penitent sinner who desires to behold his pardon written in the smiling Countenance of Christ, there must be solitude. You must rise earlier in the morning and get a half-hour to yourself, then, or you must sit up later at night, or you must steal out of bed at the dead of night, or you must even resolve that you will not go to your business until the first business of finding Christ is ended once and for all! I feel persuaded that with some of you, at least, there will be no peace to your heart and no comfortable sight of Christ until you have gone upstairs and said, “Here, alone, with every man put out and every

wandering thought excluded, will I bow the knee and cry, and look, and hope, and believe until I can say, 'I have seen the Lord! I have looked to Him whom I have pierced and I have seen my sin put away by His death upon the Cross.'"

Further, I want you to notice not only the excellence of solitude in general, but the benefit of a kind of mental solitude. Brothers and Sisters, if in the House of God, in the midst of the assembly, the Lord Jesus Christ is ever to manifest Himself personally to us, it must be in a kind of mental and spiritual solitude. I believe that the preacher will never succeed in winning a soul if he tries to make himself prominent in his own preaching. An old man who was accustomed to catching trout in a certain stream, was asked by one who had been fishing in vain, "Have you caught any fish today?" "Yes, Sir," he said, "I have a little basketful." "Oh," said the other, "I have been fishing all day long and I have taken none." "No," said the man, "but there are three rules about catching trout, which, perhaps, you have not observed. The first is–Get quite out of sight. And the second is–Get still more out of sight. And the third is–Get still more out of sight than that–and you will catch them."

And I believe that it is just so in preaching. If the preacher can get quite out of sight, still more out of sight and yet still more out of sight, then he will be the means of bringing souls to Christ. And you, dear Friends, will only see Him well in any kind of preaching when you try to forget the man. I mean that remark to apply in two

ways. Perhaps thepreacher is one whom you dearly love and you expect much from him. Well then, forget him! Expect nothing from himand look away from him to your Lord! Or, perhaps, the preacher's voice has no particular charm for you. The man is not very bright in his utterances. Well, forget him and try to see his Master! Forget the preacher for good and for bad, for better and for worse–and get to the Lord, Himself.

There is a story told of Mr. Erskine having preached on one occasion before the communion and a good woman, a child of God, heard him with such delight and was so much fed and satisfied, that she left her own pastor and went some miles on the next Lord's Day to go and hear Mr. Erskine again. That morning he was dreadfully dry and barren, or at least she thought that he was. There was no food for her whatever and, being not a very wise woman, she went in to tellhim so. She said, "Oh, Mr. Erskine, I heard you at the communion with such delight! You seemed to take me to the very gates of Heaven and I was fed with the finest of the wheat. So I have come this morning on purpose to hear you and I confess that I have got nothing out of you!" So he said, "My good woman, what did you go for last Lord's Day?" "I went to the communion, Sir." "Yes, you went to the communion. That was to have communion with the Lord?" "Yes," she said, "I did." "Well," said Mr. Erskine, "that is what you went for and you got it–and the Lord blessed my word to you, and you had communion with Him. Now, what did

you come here for this morning?" "I came to hear you, Sir." "And you have got what you came for, there is nothing in me."

Think of this story when you are remembering the Lord's servants and forgetting their Master, Himself. I believe that as you are sitting here, you whose eyes have already been opened by the Spirit of God, if you will but say, "Cause every man to go out from me. Shut the door, I have entered into my closet even while in the pew. I am alone, now, and I desire to see no man but Jesus, only." You shall see Him, for He manifests Himself to His people all alone! Oh, that each one here would say, "There is nothing but Christ that I desire to see, there is nothing else I wish to remember, I would think only of my Lord Jesus. May He be pleased to reveal Himself to me!"

II. The second remark I have to make is this–when the Lord Jesus Christ reveals Himself to any man for the first time, it is usually in the midst of terror. And THAT FIRST REVELATION OFTEN CREATES MUCH SADNESS.

When Joseph made himself known to his brethren and said to them, "I am Joseph," "they were troubled in his presence." Judah had made a very plaintive speech when it was threatened that Benjamin should be detained in Egypt and all the brothers were in deep trouble, so that when the great ruler said to them, "I am Joseph," they were not filled with joy by his words. So we read, "His brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his

presence." He was Joseph, their brother, and he loved every one of them–yet, "they were troubled at his presence." It was the best thing that could have happened to them, to be in the presence of him who was sent of God to save their lives with a great deliverance. Yet, "they were troubled at his presence."

And you and I recollect, perhaps, when, under a deep sense of sin and sorrow when we had our first perception of Christ's salvation–instead of being glad at it, we were "troubled at His Presence." "Why," we said to ourselves, "this Christ is He whom we have despised, rejected and crucified." There did not seem, at first, much comfort for us in the manifestation of Christ. One said, in order to cheer us, "He died for sinners." "But," we answered, "surely not for such sinners as we are." Even the very sound of that blessed word, "salvation," grated on our ears because we thought we should be like the fabled Tantalus–up to our necks in water which we could not drink, or surrounded by fruit which we could not pluck. "He may have died for others," we seem to say, "but scarcely for us." "We were troubled at His Presence." Even the House of God, to which we continued to go, was a place of terror to us and we cried, like Jacob did at Bethel, "How dreadful is this place!" In the worst sense of that word, it really was "dreadful" to us–full of dread although we believed it to be "none other but the House of God, and the gate of Heaven."

We said, “What right have we to be in the House of God? How can we expect to enter Heaven even though its gate is so near to us?” We heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, but we sorrowfully exclaimed, “Ah, that is only too true! He will pass by but He will never stop to look at us.” We heard that precious text, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life,” but we said, “What is it to believe in Him? How can we believe in Him?” The Light of God seemed shifting all around us, but our eyes were blind to it! The music of Heaven was sounding in all its sweetness, but our ears were closed to its melody! Everlasting love was coming near to us, yet our hearts did not open to receive it and, therefore, we could not answer Christ, for we “were troubled at His Presence.”

Dear Friends, if any of you are in this sad state, do not, therefore, be driven away from our Jesus, our greater Joseph but stand still in His presence, even though you are troubled at it, for that experience, though it is bitter, is a bitter sweet! There may be trouble in Christ’s Presence, but there is a far greater trouble in being driven from His Presence, and from the glory of His power. So keep standing just where you are, even though you stand trembling, for, by-and-by, and perhaps this very hour, He will graciously reveal Himself to you and you shall no longer tremble at His Presence, but, on the contrary, you shall rejoice with

unspeakable joy and full of glory, as you perceive that this Joseph, this Jesus, is your Brother, your Savior, your Friend, your All in All!

II. Now, thirdly, though the first appearance of Jesus, like that of Joseph, may cause sadness, THE FURTHER REVELATION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST TO HIS BRETHREN BRINGS THEM THE GREATEST POSSIBLE JOY.

If you look at this passage when you are at home, you will perhaps say to yourself, “The second time that Joseph spoke to his brethren, he had not much more to say than he said the first time. For then he said, ‘I am Joseph; does my father yet live?’ And the second time there was as much the same burden in his language, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.” So, when Christ reveals Himself in Grace to any poor heart, the revelation, for substance, is much the same as at the first, yet there is a great difference. When, for the first time, I heard the Gospel to my soul’s salvation, I thought that I had never really heard the Gospel before and I began to think that the preachers to whom I had listened had not truly preached it. But, on looking back, I am inclined to believe that I had heard the Gospel fully preached many hundreds was the difference–I then heard it as though I heard it not–andwhen I did hear it, the message may not have been any more clear in itself than it had been at former times, but the powerof the Holy Spirit was present to open my ears and to guide the message to my heart!

O dear Friend, if you have heard me preach Christ crucified and you have not yet seen Christ to your soul's salvation, I pray that you may do so now! I do not suppose that there will be any difference in the sermon, or in the Truths of God proclaimed. The difference will be that in the one case it has not reached your heart and in the other case it will. O blessed Master, speak comfortably to the hearts of sinners and to the hearts of Your people, too! Make the old, old Gospel be new to us by clothing it with a new power within our hearts and consciences, and throughout our lives!

Yet, there were some differences in the words which Joseph uttered to his brethren. If you turn again to the narrative, you will see that he began his second speech by saying to them, "Come near to me, I pray you." There was a longingfor nearness to those he loved and that is the point of my sermon at this time. I want you who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but who are, nevertheless, His elect, His redeemed ones, to come near to Him, now, by an act of faith and trust Him with yourselves, your souls, your sins and everything else! Stand not back through shame or fear, you chief of sinners, for He says, "Come near to Me, I pray you. 'Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'" As for you who are already His Brothers and Sisters, come near to Him, for to you, also, He says, "Come near to Me, I pray you."

Oh, if our Lord were actually here in bodily Presence–and I can almost picture Him in the loveliness and glory of Divine Majesty–if He were to stand here and say to us, "Come near to Me, I pray you," we would, with solemn reverence, bow before Him and we would, with joyful obedience, come near to Him and try to hold Him by the feet and worship Him! Would not each one of you press forward to come near to Him? I am sure that you would! Well, that is what you have to do in a spiritual fashion. We know not Christ after the flesh, but we do know Him after the Spirit. So, come near to Him, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ! Believe in Him, again, as you did at the first! Look to Him again as if you had never looked before! Worship Him as your Lord and your Redeemer. Prostrate yourselves before Him and adore Him as the Son of God revealed in our midst–come near to Him!

Then talk to Him. Tell Him all that is in your inmost heart. Unburden to Him your cares and your doubts. Yes, and come near to Him with your fondest affection and say to Him, now, in the silence of your spirit, "Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You." Come near to Christ with all your tears of penitence. Come near with your alabaster box of gratitude. Come near with the kisses of your lips of love. Come near with your whole heart's purest affection and come now, for that is what He invites you to do! It is a part of His manifestation of Himself to you that you should endeavor to come near to Him. Cry, "Stand back, O self!

Stand back, O devil! Stand back, all care for the world! Stand back, even care for the Church just now! My heart must come near unto her Lord and sit like a dove on His finger and be satisfied to look with her gentle eyes at the beauties of His Countenance." God help us to do so in response to our Lord's gracious invitation, "Come near to Me, I pray you."

Then, as if to help us to come near, our Lord, in this revelation, declares His relationship to us. The speaker in thetype says, "I am Joseph your brother" and the Lord Jesus Christ, though He is Head over all things to His Church and King and Lord of death and Hell, yet says to everyone who believes in Him, "I am your Brother; I am your kith and kin; Head of the family, but still of the family and touched with the feeling of your infirmities, for I was in all points tempted like as you are." Do not imagine, concerning the Lord Jesus, that there is only a fanciful or sentimental brotherhood between Him and you. It is a real brotherhood–there is no such brotherhood under Heaven so complete and true as thatwhich exists between Christ and every blood-washed soul, for it is not a brotherhood according to the flesh, but an everlasting, spiritual brotherhood. An eternal union of the closest and most vital kind is established between Christ and everyone who believes in Him.

We do not reckon it hard, do we, to win a brother's heart? If we have been a little cold towards a brother, his heart soon warms to us again and, as for our Lord, if we have not seen Him of late, if any

of us have not loved Him as we should, if we are saying, “We are troubled at His Presence. We hardly dare come to His table,” may He say to us, “Come near to Me, I pray you. I am your Brother. Come near, come nearer, nearer still. I am pleased when you are near.” Come with your sin and your lukewarmness. Come just as you are, as you came to Him at the first, and He will receive you, and will manifest Himself unto you as He does not unto the world.

In addition to revealing his relationship, which was a great motive for Joseph inviting his brothers to come near, he also told them a secret. He said, “I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.” I think he mentioned that to show them that he must be Joseph their brother, for who else in all the world knew of that shameful action on their part? I do not suppose that the Midianite merchants who bought Joseph knew that he was sold by his own brothers, or if they did know, there were none of them in Pharaohs palace, for they were Ishmaelites and they had gone their way to traffic somewhere else. All who knew of that wicked transaction were Joseph and his brothers, so by this password he lets them know that there was a sort of freemasonry between them. This was the sign, “I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.” It made them blush, I dare say, and it must have made them mourn. But it also made them feel, “Yes, that is our brother. Nobody but Joseph would know that we sold him into slavery.”

And, dear Friends, have you ever seen your Well-Beloved as He reads your heart? I have known Him read mine from the first thought in it to the last and I have thanked Him as He has read it, for I have said, “Lord, You have read that book right through, and now You know all things, You know that I love you. Alas, I did sell you into Egypt! There was a day when I chose Egypt and its pleasures rather than You and there have been days since when I have sold You again into Egypt by treating You with lukewarmness, and giving myself up to other lovers. Yes, Lord, I have sold You to the Ishmaelites by doubting You and mistrusting You. And by my sins I have stripped You of Your many-colored garment. And by my own folly I have let You go away from Your Father’s house and from the chamber of her that bore You. You know all this, my Lord, but I know You, too, because You know me so well.”

Then notice that when Joseph thus revealed himself to his brethren, he did not say more till he had sweetly put awayall their offenses against him. They had been troubled because they knew that they had sold him into Egypt, but he said to them, “Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me here.” So Jesus says to His loved ones who have grieved Him by their evil deeds, “Be not grieved, for I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.‘ Be not angry with yourselves, for I will receive you graciously and love you freely. Be not angry with yourselves, for your sins, which are

many, are all forgiven. Go and sin no more. For My name's sake will I defer My anger. Therefore, 'Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson they shall be as wool.'"

Many of you know the way our Savior talks. I pray that He may just now make every Believer sure that there is not a sin against him in God's Book of Remembrance. May you, dear Friends, be clear in your conscience from all dead works! May you have the peace of God which passes all understanding to keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus and in the clear white light of your Savior's glorious Presence. May you see the wounds He endured when suffering for your sins! Then will you sing with the disciple whom Jesus loved, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Last of all, Joseph was not satisfied with thus revealing himself to his brethren, and assuming them of his forgiveness, but he promised them rich supplies for the future. To my mind this was the next best news to his message of forgiveness. He said to them, in effect, "You have had two years of famine. It is only through me that you have been preserved alive. You have come down to Egypt with your donkeys and your sacks, and you have taken home provender to my father and to your households. But there are yet

five more years in which there will be no plowing and no harvest. What will become of you? What little you had in store is already all consumed. God has sent me here that through those five years I may nourish you. You shall come down and live in Goshen, on the fat of the land of Egypt, and you shall never have any need, for all the treasures of the land of Egypt are mine and I will take care of you. You shall never know any need."

In like manner, Beloved, your Lord stands and says to you, "You will have many more troubles." Some of my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ who are here will be in Heaven before five more years have expired. They have good reason to be very grateful to God. But to some of us who are younger, it may be that God has appointed many a year to abide here. But our Savior lives!–

"He is at the Father's side,

The Man of Love, the Crucified"

and the arrangements of Providence are in His hands and all that Providence shall be overruled for us. "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." You will be in Egypt for a while longer, dear Friend, but you will be in the Goshen of Egypt and the good of all the land is yours! Oh, what a blessing it is to think that we have a Brother who reveals Himself to us as the Universal Provider who will not let us have a need, but will take care that, before our need comes, the supply shall be ready and we shall have nothing to do but to rejoice in Him who cares for us!

Let not that sweet thought take away from your minds what I want to be the center of all the meditation, namely, that you should come near to your Lord. We never use a crucifix–we would think it sinful to do so. Neither do I want to have an imaginary crucifix, by trying to set Christ before you so that you should picture Him mentally! But I want your faith to do much more than imagination can. The Lord Jesus Christ is spiritually here in the midst of us, according to Hisgracious promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And He hears me speaking these words at this moment–I am as sure of it as if I saw that mystic Presence with my natural eyes. If I did see Him, I know that I would fall at His feet as dead, and the rest of this service would have to be spent in awe-struck silence by everyone that did behold Him!

But, O Son of God and Son of Mary, Jesus Christ our Savior, we trust You wholly and alone to save us and we love You with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. And as we live by toYou, to live like You! We could almost wish that we might now fall down and kissYour dear feet, but You are not here in visible Presence, for You have gone up into Glory. But You are here spiritually and we come to You and say, "Lord, You are ours, and we are Yours. We will hold You and will not let You go."–

"Sun of my Soul, Savior dear,

It is not night if You are near."

Come, stay with me while yet the evening shade shall linger, till death's dark night comes on and then, instead of night, let the morning break upon my gladdened eyes because it is You that has come, the Life, the Resurrection, and not death at all!

Come, Beloved, can you not get nearer to your Lord? Can you not speak familiarly with Him? Can you not whisper into His ear the story of your love?–

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove"

and help us now to come near to Jesus! Amen and Amen! EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON:GENESIS 45:1-13; SONG OF SOLOMON 1:1-7; 3:1-5.

Genesis 45:1, 2. Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him: and he cried, Cause everyman to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud. Emotion long pent up grows intense and when, at last, it bursts forth, it cannot be restrained. "He wept aloud."

2, 3. And the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; does myfather yet live? And his brethren could not answer him for they were troubled at his presence. What a rush of thoughts must have passed through their minds when they remembered all their unkind behavior toward him! There is no wonder that "they were troubled at his presence."

And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. He pleads with them. He who was far greaterthan they–a prince among peasants–now prays to them! And is it not amazing that the Lord Jesus, our infinitelygreater Brother, at times pleads with us, even as He said to the woman at the well, “Give Me to drink”? Joseph said unto

4, 5, And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Now therefore be notgrieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me here: for God did send me before you to preserve life. “You did very wrong, but I say nothing about that, for I want you to notice how God has overruled your action, how your sin has been made to be the means of your preservation and the preservation of many besides. ‘God did send me before you to preserve life.’”

For these two years has the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years in which there shall neither be eating nor harvest. There were to be five more dreary years of utter desolation and need.

And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.How wonderfully those two things meet in practical harmony–the free will of man and the predestination of God! Man acts just as freely and just as guiltily as if there were no predestination whatever. And God ordains, arranges, supervises, and overrules just as accurately

as if there were no free will in the universe! There are some purblind people who only believe one or other of these two Truths of God, yet they are both true and the one is as true as the other. I believe that much of the theology which is tinged with free will is true and I know that the teaching which fully proclaims electing love and Sovereign Grace is also true–and you may find much of both of these Truths in the Scriptures. The fault lies in trying to compress all Truth of God under either of those two heads. These men were verily guilty for selling their brother, yet God was verily wise in permitting him to be sold. The inference which Joseph draws from their misconduct is, of course, an inference of love. Love may not be always logical, but it is sweetly consoling, as it must have been in this case.

So now it was not you that sent me here, but God: and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all hishouse, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. See how Joseph traces God's hand in his whole career?

Hasten you, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of allEgypt: come down unto me, tarry not. See how love attracts? Joseph must have his brothers near him. Now he wants to have his father, also, near. "Go up to my father, and say unto him, 'Come down unto me.'" See how great love turns pleader again? He who said to his brothers,

“Come near to me,” sends to his father the message, “Come down unto me.”

And you shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near unto me, you, and your children, and your children’s children, and your flocks, and your herds, and all that you have. Our common saying, “Love me, love my dog,” is very true! Love me, love even my flocks and my herds. So the blessing of God extends to all His chosen people have–not only to their children, but to all that they possess.

11-13. And there will I nourish you; for yet there are five years of famine; lest you and your household, and all thatyou have, come to poverty. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaks unto you. And you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hasten and bring down my father here. Love is impatient to have the object of its affection brought near. Now we will read two short portions out of the Song of Solomon from which you will see how love evermore craves for nearness to the loved one. The Song opens thus:–

Song of Solomon 1:1-4. The song of songs, which is Solomon’s. Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: forYour love is better than wine. Because of the savor of Your good ointments Your name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love You. Draw me, we will run after You. Still is love pleading, you see, but

here it is the other side pleading for nearness, the lowly one crying for help to get nearer to the Heavenly Bridegroom. “Draw me, we will run after You.”

4, 5. The King has brought me into His chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in You, we will remember Your lovemore than wine: the upright love You. I am black, but comely, O you daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. The spouse was black in herself; sunburned through her toil and hard suffering; yet lovely in the sight of her Beloved, and comely to look upon “as the curtains of Solomon.”

6, 7. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun has looked upon me: my mother’s children were angrywith me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept. Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed.– Still is there that same craving for nearness to the Beloved. Since we love Christ, we desire to be with Him. We cannot bear His absence. “Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed.”

Where You make Your flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Yourcompanions? See, dear Friends, how this same seeking after the Beloved comes out in another shape in the third chapter of the Song.

Song of Solomon 3:1. By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loves: I sought Him, but I found Him not.Sometimes, the

most eager search does not at once obtain its end. For wise reasons, Christ sometimes hides Himself from His seeking people.

2-5. I will rise now and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loves: Isought Him, but I found Him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw you Him whom my soul loves? It was but a little while that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loves: I held Him and would not let Him go until I had brought Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field–"By everything that is timid, and delicate, and pure, and full of love, I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem."–

That you stir not up, nor awake my love, till He pleases. "I have found my Beloved, and I would not lose Himagain. He has come to me, so I will not grieve Him and drive Him away." That is the one strain of our reading–"Comenear to me, I pray You; and when You come near me, stay by me still."

Ge 45:3-5 • Joseph and His Brethren

SERMON 0449

Joseph And His Brothers

"And Joseph said unto his brothers, I am Joseph; does my father yet live? And his brothers could not answer him. For they were trembled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brothers, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that you sold me here: for God did send me before you to preserve life."

Genesis 45:3-5

JOSEPH is a very eminent type of Christ. When he was hated of his brothers because he protested against their sins, and when they sold him for twenty pieces of silver, he was doubtlessly a portrait

of the despised and rejected of men whom His disciple betrayed. Afterwards in his temptations in the house of Potiphar, in the slander and consequent imprisonment in the round house of Pharaoh's prison, in his after advancement, till he became lord over all the land of Egypt, we clearly see our blessed Lord right well portrayed.

Indeed, so well is the picture drawn, that there is scarcely a stroke even though it should seem to be a mere accidental incident of the picture which has not its symbolic meaning. You shall read the history of Joseph through twenty times and yet you shall not have exhausted the type. You shall begin again, and find still some fresh likeness between this despised son of Rachel and the Son of Mary who is also God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

It is not, however, my business this morning to enter into a full description of Joseph as the type of Christ. I have a rather more practical object in hand. I shall endeavor, in the Lord's strength, to deal with tried and troubled consciences, and if it shall be my happy lot to be the means of cheering some sorrowing heart and opening some blind eye to see the personal beauties and the intense affection of the Lord Jesus, I shall be but too glad to have been God's messenger to your hearts.

To tarry no longer, but to proceed at once to so good an errand, hopeful that God will help us to accomplish it, I shall direct your attention to the picture before us as being a representation of the

way in which the Lord Jesus Christ deals with His erring Brethren, those whom His Father has given Him and whom He has purchased with His blood.

It seems to me that the condition of Judah and his brothers is a very notable picture of the state of sinners when they are awakened by the Holy Spirit. Secondly, the disguise which Joseph assumed when he dealt so roughly with them is a master representation of the manner in which Jesus Christ, the loving One, seems to deal harshly with poor coming Sinners. And thirdly, the manifestation which Joseph afterward made to his brothers, is but a faint representation of the declaration of love which Jesus makes to repenting spirits when at last He reveals Himself to them in mercy.

We think that the condition and posture of Judah and his brothers at the feet of the throne of Joseph, trembling in alarm, well describe THE CONDITION AND POSITION OF EVERY TRULY AWAKENED SINNER.

By different methods Joseph had at last awakened the consciences of his ten brothers. The point which seemed to have been brought out most prominently before their consciences was this–"We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us and we would not hear. Therefore is this distress come upon us." And though, in the speech which Judah made, it was not necessary to accuse themselves of crime, yet in the confession, "God has found out the iniquity of your servants,"

Joseph could see evidently enough, that the recollection of the pit and of the sale to the Ishmaelites was vividly before their mind's eyes.

Now, Beloved, when the Lord, the Holy Spirit, arouses sinners' consciences, this is the great sin which He brings to mind–"Of sin because they believed not on Me." Once the careless soul thought it had very little to answer for–"I have forgotten and forgiven." But now, all of a sudden, the conscience perceives that the soul is guilty of despising, rejecting and slaughtering Christ. What a sin is this, my Brethren! And what pangs we endured when first this crime was laid to our charge and we were compelled to plead guilty to it!

O Lord Jesus, did I accuse You to Your enemies? Did I betray You? Did I adjudge You to the Cross? Were my cries virtually heard in the streets, "Crucify Him, crucify Him"? Is it true that my sins were the nails which fastened You to the tree? Is it so, that I had a share in Your bloody murder–a tragedy by which the world became a deicide, and man the murderer of his own Redeemer? It is even so. If our conscience is in a right state, we are forced to acknowledge it. Do you not know, Sinner, every time you prefer the pleasures of this world to the joys of Heaven, you spit in the face of Christ? Every time, when to get gain in your business, you do an unrighteous thing, you are like Judas selling Him for thirty pieces of silver.

Every time you make a false profession of religion, you give Him a traitor's kiss. Every sermon which you hear, which makes a temporary impression on your mind, which impression you afterwards blot out, makes you more and more Christ's despiser and rejecter. Every word you have spoken against Him, every hard thought you have had of Him, has helped to complete your complicity with the great crowd which gathered around the Cross of Calvary, to mock and jeer the Lord of Life and Glory.

Now, if there is any sin which will make a man deeply penitent, I think that this sin, when it is really brought home to the conscience, will affect us. To slay Him who did me no hurt, the holy and the harmless One! To assist in hounding to the tree the man who scattered blessings with both His hands, and who had no thought, nor care, nor love, save for those who hated Him. To pierce the hands that touched the leper, and that broke the bread, and multiplied the fishes! To fasten to the accursed wood the feet which had often carried His weary body upon painful journeys of mercy!

Oh, this is base, indeed. But when I think He loved me and gave Himself for me, that He chose me, before the stars were made, or the heavens fixed upon their everlasting arches, and that I, when He came to me in the Gospel, should have rejected and despised, and even mocked Him–this is intensely, infinitely cruel. Jesus, You do forgive me, but I can never forgive myself for such a sin as this.

Dear Friends, has the Holy Spirit made you feel that you are guilty? If so, I am glad of it, for when we once feel guilty concerning the death of Jesus, our Brother, it is not long before He will reveal Himself to us in mercy, blotting out our sin forever.

A second thought, however, which tended to make Joseph's brothers feel in a wretched plight was this, that they now discovered that they were in Joseph's hands. There stood Joseph, second to none but Pharaoh in all the empire of Egypt. Legions of warriors were at his beck and command. If he should say, "take these men, bind them hand and foot," or, "cut them in pieces," none could interpose. He was to them as a lion and they were as his prey, which he could rend to pieces at his will.

Now to the awakened sinner, this also is a part of his misery, that he is entirely in the hands of that very Christ whom he once despised. For that Christ who died has now become the Judge of the quick and dead, He has power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to as many as His Father has given Him. The Father judges no man, He has committed all judgment to the Son. Do you see this, Sinner, He whom you despised is your Master?

The moth beneath your finger, which you can crush, and that cannot escape from you, may well fear. But you are beneath the fingers of the crucified Son of God. Today, He whom you have despised has you absolutely at His will. He has but to will it and the breath is gone from your nostrils–and while yet in your seat you are

a corpse. And more, at His will you are in Hell amidst its flames. Oh, what an awful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, for even our God is a consuming fire.

Remember, Sinner, you are in His hands in such a way that unless you repent and receive Him–unless you "kiss the Son," at once, He may be angry, and you may "perish in the way when His wrath is kindled but a little." For lo, He comes riding upon the clouds of judgment. Jesus of Nazareth comes, robed in majesty. The books shall be opened, and He shall divide the nations as the shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. Then in vain shall you ask the pitiless rocks to give you shelter in their flinty hearts, or the stern mountains to conceal you in their hollow caverns!

You shall seek to hide from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne, but neither Heaven nor earth, nor Hell, shall afford you shelter. For everywhere, the eyes of Him that wept shall follow you like flames of fire–and the hands of Him that were once nailed to the tree shall crush you as a cluster in the hand of the gleaner of grapes. You shall feel that it is an awful thing to have turned long-suffering mercy into righteous hatred. You shall know that to have rejected mercy is to have drawn down upon your head the full fury of the justice of the Avenger.

Yet, further, there was another thought which combined to make Joseph's brothers feel still more wretched. Being in his hands, they felt also in their souls that they deserved to be there. We are verily

guilty, they said. They offered no apologies, nor extenuations, for that one sin–that crying sin. They might for the matter of Benjamin–but they said, we are verily guilty concerning our brother. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ! You know what it is to have the Holy Spirit in your heart, making you plead guilty!

Well do I remember when I stood at the bar of God's justice and heard the accusation read out against me. Nothing could I answer but guilty. Indeed, my guilt was so plainly before my eyes that my lips could not frame a denial, and had the judge put on the black cap that day and said, "Take him back to the place from where he came and give him his portion with the tormentors," I should have been lost–and the great God would have been most just and righteous.

Careless sinners may talk about the hardness of God in condemning man to punishment, but once let the Holy Spirit show man the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and you will never hear a word about that. No! The sinner cries, "Lord, whatever You do with me, You can not chastise me more than I deserve. Though You should crush me beneath Your feet, or though you should pile up the fires of Tophet and Your breath should be as the stream of brimstone to kindle it, yet You could not curse too heavily or consume too fiercely your traitorous, rebellious, depraved and infamous creature. I deserve everything except Your love and Your pity. And if You give me these, I shall be compelled to say, forever

and ever, that You gave Divine Grace to the most undeserving–the most unworthy rebel that ever profaned Your universe."

Brethren, when conscience goes against a man, he has a stern enemy to contend with. When it is written, "David's heart smote him," such blows come home. So is it with every sinner that is truly led to see his own state. He will feel that he is not only guilty, and that he is in the hands of One from whom he cannot escape, but he will feel that it is right he should be so, and the only wonder he will have in his own mind is that he has been out of Hell so long–that the longsuffering and mercy of God have been so marvelously extended to him.

Under a sense of all these things–note what the ten brothers did. They began to plead. Ah, nothing makes a man pray like a sense of sin. When we stand before God guilty, then our groans and sighs and tears make true and real supplication. I fear there are some of you present who have from infancy repeated a form of prayer who have never prayed in your lives. Yes, and some of you, too, who use an extemporary utterance and yet who never pray. I do not think men generally pray as a matter of duty.

When men fall down in the streets and break their limbs they do not cry out as a matter of duty–they cry because they cannot help it. And it seems to me that such a prayer God hears–that comes out of a man because he cannot help praying–when the deep agony of his spirit makes him groan. When he cannot be kept from his secret

chamber, when he would sooner pray behind a hedge, or in a field, or in a garret, or even in the streets, than not pray at all. If there were an edict issued that no man should pray at all, the really praying man would go into Daniel's lions' den, for he could no more cease to pray than cease to breathe.

Can the hart in the wilderness cease from panting for the water brooks? Can a sick child cease from crying for its mother? So the living soul cries after God because he cannot help panting after Him. He must pray or he must die, he must find Divine Grace or perish, and therefore in his sore extremity–from an intense and awful agony of heart–he cries again and again, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" This is the prayer that God hears. Such are the petitions which are acceptable to the Lord Jehovah.

Brethren, will you look at yourselves, and at your own experience this morning, and see if you ever were brought down to the spot where Judah and his brothers stood? For I fear we have never been brought rightly unless we have been brought here. He that was never condemned, I think, was never forgiven. He who never confessed his guilt cannot have had a pardon. And if we have never trembled before Jesus the Judge, we can never have rejoiced before Jesus the elder Brother.

II. We turn, however, now to remark that THE SINGULARLY ROUGH BEHAVIOR OF JOSEPH IS A NOTABLE

REPRESENTATION OF THE WAY IN WHICH CHRIST DEALS WITH SOULS UNDER CONVICTION OF SIN.

Joseph always was their brother, always loved them, had a heart full of compassion for them, even when he called them spies. Kind words were often hastening to his lips, yet for their good he showed himself to be as a stranger and even as an enemy, so that he might bring them very low and prostrate before the throne.

My dear Friends, our Lord Jesus Christ often does this with truly awakened souls whom He means to save. Perhaps to some of you who are today conscious of guilt, but not of mercy, Christ seems as a stern and angry Judge. You think of Him as one who can by no means spare the guilty. Your only idea of Him is of one who would say to you, "Get you behind Me, Satan, you savor not the things that are of God." When you read the Scriptures, your mind, perhaps is led to dwell upon His denunciations rather than upon His promises.

Such dreadful chapters as the twenty-fifth of Matthew are more upon your mind than those blessed portions in John, such as, "Let not your heart be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in Me." When you do think of Jesus, it is not as of one who is saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." But you rather think you hear Him say, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." Poor Hearts, you discern all the sternness of His upbraiding but not the

softness and gentleness of His compassion. You see Him dealing fiercely with Pharisees and reason that He will be even more severe with you.

No, you think you have had some proofs that the Lord is not willing to bless you. As Joseph took Simeon before their eyes and put him in prison, as he laid heavy things to his brothers' charge and said to them, “You are spies, to see the nakedness of the land are you come, by the life of Pharaoh surely you are spies.” And as he demanded of them to bring Benjamin down or else he would never see their face again, so you think that Jesus Christ has treated you.

You went to Him in prayer. But instead of getting an answer He seemed to shut up your prayer in prison and keep it like Simeon bound before your eyes. Yes, instead of telling you that there was mercy, He said to you as with a harsh voice, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it unto dogs.” He appeared to shut His ears to your petitions, and to have none of your requests, and to say to you, “Except you renounce a right-eye sin, and a right-arm pleasure, and give up your Benjamin delights, you shall see My face no more,” and you have come to think, poor Soul, that Christ is hard and stern. But He is ever the gentle Mediator receiving sinners and eating with them. His usual voice is, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

But to you He seems no such Person, for He has put on a disguise and you understand not who and what He is.

But you will perceive, Brethren, in reading the narrative, that even when Joseph disguised himself, there was still much kindness discoverable in his conduct–so to the awakened sinner, even while Jesus appears to deal harshly–there is something sweet and encouraging amid it all. Do you not remember what Joseph did for his brothers? Though he was their judge, he was their host, too. He invited them to a great feast. He gave to Benjamin five times as much as to any of them. And they feasted even at the king's table.

And so, poor Sinner under an awakened conscience, you have occasional feastings at the table of hope. I know while I was under distress myself, I did have some glimpses of hope. Oh, there were times when His name was very sweet! There were seasons in the thick darkness when some few rays of light flashed in. When, like the dog that eats the crumbs under the table, now and then there fell a big crust and my soul was feasted for awhile. So has it been with you. Christ has rebuked and chastened you, but still He has sent you food from His royal table.

Yes, and there is another thing He has done for you. He has given you corn to live upon while under bondage. You would have despaired utterly if it had not been for some little comfort that He afforded you. Perhaps you would have put an end to your life–you might have gone desperately into worse sin than before–had it not

been that He filled your sack at seasons with the corn of Egypt. But mark, He has never taken any of your money yet, and He never will. He has always put your money in the sack's mouth–you have come with your resolutions, and with your good deeds–but when He has given you comfort He has always taken care to show you that He did not confer it because of any good thing you had in your hands.

When you went down and brought double money with you, yet the double money, too, was returned. He would have nothing from you. He has taught you as much as that and you begin to feel, now, that if He should bless you, it must be without money and without price. Yes, poor Soul, and there is one other point upon which your eyes may rest with pleasure. He has sometimes spoken to you comfortably. Did not Joseph say to Benjamin, "God be gracious unto you, my son"? And so, sometimes, under a consoling sermon, though as yet you are not saved, you have had a few drops of comfort.

Oh, you have gone sometimes out of the House of Prayer as light as the birds of the air, and though you could not say, "He is mine and I am His," yet you had a sort of inkling that the match would come off one day. He had said–"God be gracious to you, My son." You half thought, though you could not speak it loud enough to let your heart distinctly hear it–you half thought that the day would come when your sins would be forgiven. When the prisoner should

leap to lose his chains. When you should know Joseph, your brother, to have accepted and loved your soul. I say, then, Christ disguises Himself to poor awakened sinners just as Joseph did, but even amidst the sternness of His manner, for awhile there is such a sweet mixture of love, that no troubled one need run into despair.

But, dear Friends, I am met by a question. Some one asks, "Why does Jesus thus deal with some coming sinners? Why does He not always meet them at once as He does with some, while they are yet a great way off and fall upon their necks and kiss them?" Perhaps we can answer this question by another. Why did Joseph thus hide himself and not manifest himself to his own flesh? The answer is here–Joseph knew there was a prophecy to be fulfilled. The sun and moon and eleven stars must make obeisance to him, and their sheaves must bow down before his sheaf. So there is a prophecy concerning us–"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven and things in earth and things under the earth."

And were it not that Christ does thus deal roughly with us, perhaps we should never bow ourselves with that deep humiliation and prostration of spirit which is necessary for our good as well for His glory. I am sure that any of us who have passed through this state of mind, feel it a privilege to bow down before Him. All hail, Jesus! We bring forth the royal diadem and crown You Lord of All. We wish not to dispute Your sovereignty, nor to interfere with Your absolute dominion. Give Him all the glory! Give Him all the honor.

Our spirit bows down with even deeper reverence than the cherubim, who bow before Him with veiled faces, crying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth.”

Besides, my dear Friends, Joseph’s brothers would not have been convinced of their sin at all, if it had not been for this. It was necessary that they should know the greatness of the wrong, that they might know the value of the free pardon. The delay of manifested mercy has done much good to many of the saints. It compelled them to search the fountains of the great deep of their natural depravity, and led them to admire the freeness and richness of Divine Grace. We should have been but poor fools in Christ’s school if it had not been for the rod with which He whipped us, and the ruler with which He knocked our knuckles in our early days.

That black board of conviction was a useful implement enough in the school house. If He had not plowed deep, there never would have been a hundred-fold harvest. Since He would build a high house of joy in our hearts, there was a need that He should dig out deep foundations of sorrow–and He did it for our lasting and perpetual good. Could John Bunyan have ever written “Pilgrim’s Progress,” if he had not felt abounding sin, and rejoiced in “Grace abounding”? Could he have ever compiled such a wondrous work as the “Holy War,” if he had not himself felt all the attacks which the Town of Mansoul knew and heard the beating of the Hell drum in his own ears, just as the Mansoulians did, whose tale he tells?

Masters of Divinity are not to be made by shallow experience. We make not sailors on dry land, nor veterans in times of peace. Christ's rugged warriors who shall do great exploits for Him, must be like the Spartan youths. They must be brought up by a Spartan training, and flogged, and made to bear the yoke in their youth, that afterwards they may be good soldiers of Christ, able to endure hardness and to achieve great victories. This that looks so cruel in Christ is only masked mercy. He puts the visor on His face and looks like an enemy, but a friendly heart is there still towards His chosen.

Let us remember, then, if we are today guilty and moaning our guiltiness–we ought not to forget that Christ is a Brother though He seems to be an enemy, that He loves us with a pure and perfect love though He speaks harshly to us. If He does not answer our prayers, He still intends to. If no pity or compassion are expressed, yet beyond a doubt He is not flinty of soul, nor is He hard to be moved to commiserate His children.

III. I now come to the last point, and here may God be pleased to let light break in upon darkened souls. JOSEPH AFTERWARDS REVEALED HIMSELF TO HIS BROTHERS, AND SO THE LORD JESUS DOES IN DUE TIME SWEETLY REVEAL HIMSELF TO POOR CONSCIENCE-STRICKEN PENITENT SINNERS.

The reading of the chapter which we heard this morning is enough to bring tears to all eyes that are connected with tender hearts. I must acknowledge that when reading the chapter in my own study, I could not resist weeping copiously at the picture which the Holy Spirit has so admirably drawn. Those ten, poor trembling brothers. Judah's speech just finished and all of them on their knees supplicating the clearing of the court house and then Joseph, whose soul was swelling with such grief and love, bursting out with that, "I am Joseph."

What a scene for tender souls! Though he must have spoken in deep affection, yet, "I am Joseph," must have fallen on their ears like thunder. "Joseph! Where are we now? Better for us that we were in a lion's den, than here with him whom we mocked, saying, 'Behold, this dreamer comes,' with him whom we sold and dipped his coat of many colors in blood. And then took it to his father, saying, 'See whether this is your son's coat or not.' " Well might they tremble!

And then look at the tenderness of Joseph when he says to them again, while they are retiring from him afraid, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt, I pray you come near to me." You hear his pathetic speech as he discovers his brotherhood and relationship, and then you see that generous embrace when, beginning with Benjamin, his next of kin, his own uterine brother,

he afterwards weeps with all the rest and sends them home with favors, enriched and happy.

Dear Friends, I say this is but a picture of what Christ does to some of us, and of what He is prepared to do to others of you who are trembling at His feet. Notice that this discovery was made secretly. Christ does not show Himself to sinners in a crowd. Every man must see the love of Christ for himself. We go to Hell in bundles, but we go to Heaven one by one. Each man must personally know in his own heart his own guilt–and privately and secretly, where no other heart can join with him–he must hear words of love from Christ. “Go and sin no more.” “Your sins which are many are all forgiven you.”

Mark, that as this was done in secret, the first thing Joseph showed them was his name. “I am Joseph.” Blessed is that day to the sinner when Christ says to him, “I am Jesus, I am the Savior.” When the soul discerns instead of the Lawgiver, the Redeemer. When it looks to the wounds which its own sin has made, and sees the ransom price flowing in drops of gore. When he looks to the head his own iniquity had crowned with thorns–and then he sees beaming there a crown of glory provided for the sinner! Sinner, poor troubled Sinner, Jesus speaks to you this morning, from His very Cross where He bled for You! He says, “I am Jesus, look to Me, trust Me and be saved, repose your confidence wholly upon

Me. I will wash you from your sin, carry you safely through time and bring you gloriously in eternity."

Having revealed his name, the next thing he did was to reveal his relationship; "I am Joseph, your brother." Oh, blessed is that heart which sees Jesus to be its Brother, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, the son of Mary as well as the Son of God. Sinner, whom the Holy Spirit has awakened, Christ is your Brother! He feels for you, He has a fellow sympathy with you in the present pangs that wring your heart. He loves you, He loved you before you knew anything of Him. He has given you the best proof of that love in that He has redeemed you with His blood.

And revealing his relationship, Joseph also displays his affection. "Does my father yet live?" As a brother does, he remember the head of the household. Jesus tells you that the brotherhood between His soul and yours is not fanciful or metaphorical, but lets His heart go out to you. Penitent Sinner, can you believe it? Jesus loves you– loves you though you hated Him. Poor awakened Sinner, you think it isn't possible? It is. It is not only possible, but certain. He who is Heaven's Lord, before whom the angels bow, loves YOU! I remember one man who was converted to God, who told me that the means of his conversion was hearing a hymn read one Sunday morning in the congregation, when we were worshipping in Exeter Hall and that hymn was this–"Jesus, lover of my soul."

And just those words struck him. “Does He love my soul? Oh,” said he, “nothing had ever broken me before. But the thought that Jesus loved me was too much for me. I could not help giving my heart to Him.” The old school men used to teach that it was impossible for any man to know that another loved him without returning the love in some degree. And surely, Sinner, though you feel yourself to be the vilest wretch on earth, when we tell you that it is, “a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief,” this should be a reason why your heart should go out to Him. He loves you, oh quickened, convicted Sinner! Oh, trust Him, and taste that love in your own heart.

And then will you please notice, that having thus proved his affection, Joseph gave them an invitation to approach. “Come near to me, I pray you.” You are getting away in the corner. You want to hide away in the chamber, alone. You do not want to tell anybody about your sorrow. Jesus says, “Come near to Me, I pray you. Do not hold your griefs away from Me. Tell Me what it is you want. Confess to Me your guilt. Ask Me for pardon, if you want it. Come near to Me, do not be afraid. I could not smite with a hand that bought you. I could not spurn you with the foot that was nailed for you to the tree. Come to Me!”

Ah, this is the hardest work in the world, to get a sinner to come near to Christ. I thought myself that He was such a hard, hard

Christ, and that He wanted me to do so much before I might come to Him. When I heard that gracious message, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth,” my heart ventured to look and oh, joy of joys, the burden rolled away, the sin was blotted out, my soul stood accepted in Christ! “Come near to Me I pray you.” Oh that I knew where a broken heart was this morning! I think I would point him out and look him in the face and say in Jesus' name, “Poor sinner, come near to me, I pray you.”

Oh, why do you stay when Jesus invites? Why do you tarry in your despair when Jesus bids you come to Him? Shall the prisoner hug his chains? Shall the captive cleave to his dungeon? Arise! Be free! Arise, He calls you! Sinner, come near to Jesus. Salvation is in Him, and, as He bids you, take it.

I want you to notice again, having given the invitation, what consolation Joseph gave! He did not say, “I am not angry with you. I forgive you”– he said something sweeter than that–“Be not angry with yourselves,” as much as to say, “As for me, you need not question about that–be not grieved nor angry with yourselves.” So my blessed, my adorable Master, says to a poor, cast down, dejected sinner–“As for My forgiving you, that is done. My heart is made of tenderness, My heart melts with love. Forgive yourself. Be not grieved nor angry with yourself–it is true you have sinned, but I have died. It is true you have destroyed yourself, but I have saved you. Weep no more. Dry those eyes and sing aloud–

‘I will praise You every day,
Now Your anger’s turned away.
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding Sacrifice.
Jesus has become at length
My Salvation and my strength;
And His praises shall prolong,
While I live, my pleasant song.’ "

Dear Friends, last of all, having thus given them the consolation, he gave a quietus for their understanding in an explanation. He says, “It was not you, it was God that sent me here.” So does Christ say to the poor soul that feels itself guilty of the Lord’s crucifixion. “It was not you,” says He,“ it was God that sent Me to preserve your lives with a great deliverance. Man was the second agent in Christ’s death, but God was the great first Worker, for He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Man did it to destroy righteousness, but God did it to save even the ungodly.

Man has the crime but God has the triumph. Man rules, but God overrules. The gall has become honey, out of the eater has come forth sweetness. Death is destroyed by Jesus' death. Hell upturned by Hell’s blackest deed. Sinner, Christ died to save you with a great deliverance, what do you say? Are you willing to come to Him? If so, He made you willing. Do you say, “But what is to come?”–to

come to Christ is to trust Him. Are you willing to renounce yourself and your sin and trust Christ, and take Him to have and to hold, for better, for worse, through life and through death, in time and in eternity?

Does your heart say, "Yes"? Will you come to this Man? Shall there be a match made of it this morning? Shall your heart be affianced and married to Christ? Ah, then, put this ring of promise on your finger and go away affianced unto Christ and this is the ring, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool, though they are red like crimson they shall be whiter than snow." I feel this morning as though my Master had given me such a sweet message that I cannot tell it as I would, but it may be that there is some soul here that is like a little flower which has opened its cup to catch the dew drop and it will be good for such a soul.

It may be there is a heart here that has been in darkness, and though it is but a candle I can bring, yet that light shall be pleasant to its poor eyes so long used to this horrid gloom. Oh, that some heart here would trust the Lord Jesus. Is there none? Must we go back and say in the closet, "Lord, who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Surely, there is one. Perhaps it is a stranger here, of whom I shall never hear again in this world. Well, but the Lord shall hear of it, and He shall have the praise.

Perhaps it is one that has long sat in this House of Prayer, invulnerable up till now. Perhaps the arrow has found a joint in the harness. O Soul! By Him that stretches out His arms of love to you and by the Divine Grace that moves you now to run into those arms, come to Him! “Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves.” It was God that put Christ to death, that He might save you with a great deliverance. Trust Jesus and you are saved, and you shall give Him praise, world without end. Amen.

Ge 45:28 • Jacob and Doubting Souls — A Parallel

SERMON 2470

Jacob And Doubting Souls A Parallel

"And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive: I will go and see him before I die."

Genesis 45:28

I THINK that the Patriarch Jacob may well serve as the type and emblem of a doubting soul, one who has been told the good news of salvation, the Gospel of God's Grace, but who cannot bring his mind to believe it.

Let us think for a few minutes of old Jacob. First of all, he was a man who was very ready to believe evil tidings. When his sons held up before him a coat dipped in the blood of a kid and asked him if it was not the coat he had given to Joseph, the Patriarch

answered, “It is my son’s coat; an evil beast has devoured him. Joseph is, without doubt, torn in pieces.” He had no doubt about it, yet it was not true. And we have many hearers who will believe anything that is terrible, even though it may not be true. If there is something in the sermon which seems to condemn them, even though it may not be meant to condemn them, they are sure to take home that part of the discourse. If they see any passage of Scripture that appears to frown upon them, they retain that in their memory and they keep on stinging themselves with it, often making themselves unhappy with that which was never intended to apply to them! I wish that readiness to believe the dark sayings could be turned to an equal readiness to receive the consolations of the Word of God. Surely, we ought not to be so prejudiced against ourselves as to accept every evil thing and to reject every good thing. No, let us weigh fairly the evidence for either form of teaching and believe, or reject either according as the evidence, for it may be strong or weak. Jacob would, all the while, have willingly believed that which was good, if he could have believed it. If you couldhave asked him if he had any objection to believe that Joseph was alive, the old man would have answered, “Oh, no! It would be the joy of my heart if I could but think it to be true.” There are some whom I am now addressing who are in a similar case. Ask them whether they have any objection to believe that Jesus Christ is their Savior, that He loved them and gave Himself for them, and they would,

each one, reply, “Object to believe this? Why, I would give my eyes–I would give my life–if I could but think it to be true!” Such an unbeliever as that is a very hopeful one because it is evident that he is not a willful unbeliever–he does not desire to be so. His heart longs to grasp the Truth of God which, for the moment, his mind dares not accept! Jacob, in this respect, is the type of very many who hear the Gospel, but dare not receive it and yet oh, how they wish they could! Their very soul hungers and thirsts after it, but they are afraid to take it lest they should be taking that which is not truly theirs.

So far, the parallel between Jacob and the doubting soul runs very properly. Next notice that to the Patriarch, the truth about his son Joseph seemed altogether incredible. Joseph was alive and governor over all the land of Egypt–but the old man had so long believed the contrary that he could not readily get out of the rut! He had sorrowfully said, “Joseph is, without doubt, torn in pieces,” and this idea, though it was most painful to him, had, nevertheless, eaten its way into his belief and he could not get it out of him. So do I know some who have written bitter things against themselves–“I shall be lost, I know I shall. It is not possible that Christ will save me. He will certainly reject me.” And, although that is quite untrue–as untrue as Jacob’s belief that Joseph was dead–yet they have hugged their despair so long that they cannot give it up! They are like the man who refused to be comforted, or

those afflicted ones of whom we read, “Their soul abhors all manner of meat and they draw near to the gates of death.” Oh, that the Holy Spirit would come upon these poor unwilling doubters and help them to know that a lie, however long it is believed, is not the truth! Though we may be in despondency of spirit for years, yet, if there is no real cause for that despondency, it is a pity that we should continue in it. Oh, that the Holy Spirit would enable us to break those bands asunder and joyfully to believe what is true–that there is a Savior, an all-sufficient Savior, that all power is committed into His hands–and that He will rejoice this very hour to save and bless our souls!

The news appeared incredible to Jacob because it seemed “too good to be true.” His eyes flashed for the moment with a joyful light. “Joseph alive? Joseph–my Joseph–ruler over all the land of Egypt?” And then the very brightness of the thought seemed to blind the eyes of his faith. “It cannot be true,” he said–“it is too good to be true.” Suppose that one of you had lost a son many years ago and that a person met you outside the Tabernacle and said to you, “That boy of yours who was reported dead 20 years ago, is not dead! He is in Australia, alive and well”? You would be staggered, would you not? And I have no doubt you would say to yourself, “It must be somebody like him, or somebody else of the same name–it cannot be my son–it is impossible! I know that he is

dead.” You would hardly believe it! Therefore, do not blame poor old Jacob for his doubts!

There are many who are, spiritually, in just that state. They say, “What? You say that Jesus died for me, that I have been redeemed with His most precious blood, that I can have my sins forgiven? It cannot be! What? That I can be taken up to dwell with Christ in Heaven? Oh, that it were true! It cannot be true. I did sing, just now–

‘Even me, even me,

Let Your mercy light on me.’

but oh, surely, it cannot come to me! I must be left out. When the showers of blessing are falling, I cannot hope that there will be even a drop for me.“ Well, then, you and old Jacob are very much alike! I think you must be first cousins! Yet Jacob was wrong and so are you–the news is not "too good to be true.”

Through not believing his sons, Jacob began to faint in spirit. When they told him that Joseph was yet alive, we read that “Jacob’s heart fainted, for he believed them not.” There is nothing that so stops the action of the heart and brings on faintness of the spirit as unbelief! As soon as the old man began to believe the good tidings that his sons brought, “the spirit of Jacob, their father, revived.” Faith makes our spirits revive, but unbelief seems to strike us dead. I do not wonder that some of you are sad, dull and unhappy–as long as you cherish your unbelief, you must be so. O

Holy Spirit, deliver them from this unbelief! Revive them by enabling them to believe what is true–there is a Savior, a Savior yet alive, a Savior who is Lord of All–able and willing to save them!

There, then, is the parallel between Jacob and a doubting soul.

But, at last, Jacob rose out of his despondency and doubt. According to our text, "Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive: I will go and see him before I die." I think the time has come for some others to say, "It is enough." After having been attendants on the means of Grace, perhaps for 30 years or more, they ought to be able to say, "It is enough." There came in here, last Lord's Day, from a distant part of the country, an aged man, a farmer. He came up on Saturday for no other reason but to find the Savior. He heard me say that I would see enquirers on Tuesday, so he was here then. He said, "I left my farm, though it is a large one," and then he told me something about himself, and he added, "I want to find the Savior. I thought, Sir, I would come and see if I could find Christ on the Sabbath day and I waited on that I might go to the Prayer Meeting on Monday night, and then come and speak to you about my soul."

I thought, "Yes, and it is worthwhile to leave your farm to find a Savior. It is worthwhile to come from a distant county of England–it would be worthwhile to come from the ends of the earth if one might but find the Savior." Before I left him, I think he could say, "It is enough. Jesus is still alive and I will trust Him even now"–

and he went on his way rejoicing! Oh, that some others might be able to say with him, “It is enough!”

There are two points upon which I think Jacob could say, “It is enough.” First, the evidence was enough to convince him–“It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive.” Secondly, the conviction was enough to move him–“I will go and see him before I die.” The second point is quite as important as the first. Indeed, it is that to which the first ought to practically lead us.

The first point is that Jacob had ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO CONVINCE HIM–“It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive.”

The question for us to consider concerns not Joseph, but Jesus. He is still alive. He died upon the Cross, but He has risen from the dead and gone into Glory–“therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them.”

The evidence that good old Jacob had received was personal testimony. His sons said concerning Joseph, “We have been to Egypt and we have seen him.” There have been many witnesses to testify that Christ is still alive. Not only did the 11 Apostles see Him many times, but over 500 brethren at once saw the Son of God after He had risen from the dead. There is no fact in history that is better attested than the fact that He was crucified and that He rose again. The Resurrection is as true after nearly 1,900 years as it was the day it happened! The distance of time does not alter the fact!

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died on Calvary and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea. The third day He rose from the dead, no more to die, and ascended into Heaven, where He sits at the right hand of God. To this fact, His disciples bore unfaltering witness–they were honest, simple-minded men, without enough imagination to make up the story. They were so sure of this Truth that they died rather than deny it–most of them died by the most painful forms of death–yet nothing could ever make one of them speak a word to the contrary! They declared that they had seen Him, that they had eaten with Him–some of them could say that they had touched Him and one had put His finger into the print of the nails. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, Jesus Christ is still alive and I pray that each one here may say, "The testimony of these many witnesses is true, I believe it. It is enough; Jesus is still alive."

Moreover, the Holy Spirit bore witness to this fact, for after the ascension of the Savior, the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and their companions and they began to speak with other tongues. They went into all the countries of the world and wherever they went, they were able to speak the language without having to learn it. At the same time, the Holy Spirit enabled them to work miracles by which the sick were healed–and these two things, together, were the witness of the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, still lived and that in His name salvation was to be

preached to the sons of men! To me, this is evidence enough–the witness of faithful men and the works of the Holy Spirit.

Beside that, there are many of us who are witnesses that, in answer to prayer, we have received pardon through the living Christ. We have also received, through that living Christ, a new life into our soul. We have passed from death to life and those who knew us before our conversion must notice a very remarkable change in us. They may not all admire it, but they must all admit it and bear witness that we are now other than we used to be! The Lord Jesus, in whom we have trusted, has given us new motives, new desires–in fact, a new nature and a new life–and we are witnesses to this Truth of God that He is a living Savior, still mighty to save! I wish you could all say, with regard to these witnesses, "It is enough." I do not know what more witnesses we can give you and I may say of the Apostles, and of all those who bear witness by the Holy Spirit, "If you receive not their witness, neither will you believe though men should rise from the dead and bear testimony to the fact that Jesus lives to save the sons of men."

But then Jacob had, in addition to this personal testimony of witnesses, the testimony of accurate reports, for we find that Jacob's sons told their father, "all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them." Those words of Joseph were remarkable words, for he traced God's Providence in all that had happened. He said to his brothers, "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in

the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me here, but God, and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." Jacob knew that those words were after the manner of Joseph, for Joseph always lived in the fear and love of God. As for our Lord Jesus Christ, He has come to teach us of the Father. He reveals God to us–that which He speaks to us, He speaks not of Himself, but in the power and in the name of God–and we know that His word is true because it is a word which glorifies God and not man!

Joseph also spoke somewhat about his own position and power. "Tell my father," he said, "thus says your son, Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt." So, the Lord Jesus Christ has told us that all power is given to Him in Heaven and on earth and, therefore, we are to go and teach all nations and bring them as disciples to His feet. The words He speaks concerning Himself are not boastful or false–they are the utterance of a humble, meek and lowly Savior who never said a word more or less than the truth!

Joseph had also spoken to them very tenderly and kindly about their father. He would do everything for his father and his brothers, giving them the best of the land. And our Lord Jesus has spoken very tenderly to us. "Come to Me," He says, "all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The words of the Lord Jesus Christ, if you hear them or read them, are their own witness!

There is a certain distinct unique majesty about the language of Jesus Christ which somehow penetrates to the hearts of men and carries its own convincing witness into the mind. I pray you, then– you who have for years heard His words–say, "It is enough. We have heard quite sufficient from Him to compel us to believe that He lives and that He is able to save." How long must He continue to speak to you who are now getting old hearers of the Gospel and yet have not believed it? How much longer must we persuade, entreat, exhort in the name of the Lord Jesus? How much longer must His Words be read and quoted in your hearing? May God the Holy Spirit speedily end your indecision and bring you, each one, to say, "It is enough; Jesus is alive, there is a living Savior, I will take Him to be my Savior!"

There were also abundant tokens which greatly helped to convince old Jacob–"When he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him," he said, "It is enough." To what shall I liken these wagons? It seems to me that some of you who are doubting whether Christ will save you ought to think to yourselves, "Well, there is the Sabbath, which is a special token of God's love." As I came here this evening, I thought to myself, "Why has God appointed a Sabbath day if He does not mean to give rest to men?" What a mockery it is to have one day in seven set apart for you to think of God if God does not mean to think of you! The very institution of the Sabbath seems to me to be a "wagon" in which to

bring you to Christ. And why does God send ministers to preach His Gospel? I said to myself, as I came here this evening, "I am going on the silliest errand that ever moved the foot of man unless God means to save men by the message He has given me to deliver." What is the use of my talking, and talking, and talking, unless there is a living Christ and unless that living Christ is really able to save? He has sent you a minister who, with all his faults, loves your souls and who would do anything within the compass of a human mind to bring you to Christ if he only knew how to do it! Surely God did not send us to speak in His name and move us to an agony about your souls if He did not mean to bless you! So, the Christian ministry, itself, is like a "wagon" in which to bring men to Christ.

I have often thought to myself, when I have been going home after preaching, "I have put the Truth of God before my hearers so plainly that if they want to be saved, I have clearly shown them the way to Christ." I used to attend the means of Grace very, very often when I was under concern of soul, and to the best of my knowledge and belief I never heard the Gospel simply and plainly put to me while I was listening for it. This is the pity, that so often our Brothers preach very fine sermons, but they are no good to seeking souls and they do not lead them to Christ. But as soon as I heard that poor Primitive Methodist preach Christ–and he preached Christ, alone, because he did not know anything else and I, myself,

am very much in that condition–why, as soon as ever I heard that, I laid hold of it! When fish are hungry, they bite at the bait, and if you really want Christ, you will at once lay hold of Him! If you do not accept Him, at any rate He has been plainly set before you. And if you refuse Him, you shall deliberately and willfully reject and refuse Him. I pray that you may not do that.

O Sinner, play not the fool with your own soul! If you must play, go home to your children, pick up their toys, throw their balls and twist their skipping-ropes, but trifle not with your souls, and with God, and Heaven and Hell! If I have lied to you about these matters, condemn me, for I deserve it. But if I have spoken the truth to you, hear me, or if you do not hear me, hear the still small voice of your own conscience, or rather, hear the voice of God which has been speaking through me! Believe in Jesus, now that you are under the influence of a ministry which may be to you what Joseph's wagons were to old Jacob!

Think also, why is it that you are instructed in the Truths revealed in the Word of God? Why is it that there are so many expostulations and warnings in it? Why is it that this precious Book is put into all your homes? Why is it so full of invitations and promises but that all this is intended to be a "wagon" to bring you to your Joseph, even to Jesus? When you see God, as it were, moving Heaven and earth to help you to salvation, bending Providence in the direction of aiding you to hear and to believe the

Gospel, surely you ought to say, “It is enough; Jesus is still alive; God means mercy for me; Christ Jesus can save me and He will save me.”–

“Jesus sits on Zion’s hill,

And receives poor sinners still.”

The evidence brought before Jacob was sufficient to convince him. He said, “It is enough.” Oh, that you, also, maysay the same concerning the evidence brought before you!

II. But now comes the tug of war–THE CONVICTION WAS ENOUGH TO MOVE HIM. “Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive; I will go and see him before I die.”

Oh, how many people there are in the world who say, “Yes, there is a Savior,” and yet they are not saved! Some of you have often sung–

“There is a fountain filled with blood,

Drawn from Immanuel’s veins

And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,

Lose all their guilty stains.”

Is it so? Do you believe that? Then, why have not you lost all your guilty stains? “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” You never doubted the truth of that text and yet you have not believed on the only-begotten Son of God and you have not received everlasting life! I can understand those who reject the Scriptures, altogether, and who deny that there is any Savior for

sinners. I see where they are and feel that there is some kind of consistency in their conduct, deeply as I grieve over it, but I cannot understand what you mean when you admit the truth of what we preach, yet do not practically obey it! If the Gospel is true, why do you not believe it? If you believe it, why do you not act upon it? It is not sufficient to merely say that you trust Christ for salvation and then to fancy there is nothing further to be done.

I have often tried to expose that delusion by representing a pilot as being brought on board a vessel and the captain and sailors saying that they all had confidence in him–that he would take the ship safely into the haven. They said they trusted him but, having declared their faith in him, they all went below and lay down to sleep. Now, of course, the pilot needed to have the sails attended to and the ship put in good trim! And he needed the helmsman to manage the rudder, so he called out, "What are you all doing down there? Why have you all run away from me?" And one of them answered, "Because we trust in you! You are the pilot and you said you would bring us safely into port. We trust in you, so the captain has gone to his cabin and all the sailors have gone to their berths. You see, it is a wet night, a strong northwester is blowing, it is very cold and we would rather be comfortable and snug in our berths than up there on deck. You said that you would bring us to the haven and we trust in you to do it." The pilot would, of course, reply, "You do not really trust in me, for if you did, you would do

as I bid you! You are mocking me, you are insulting me. You have brought me on board your ship to make a fool of me! If you really trusted me, every man would take his proper place and do his duty, and then, as I gave the word of command, it would be obeyed, and so you would be brought safely into port."

It is just so with Christ and ourselves. We trust Him entirely to save us, but we have no right to say that we are saved if we do not practically obey Him. It is beyond all excuse that men should know that they need a Savior and that there is a Savior–and yet that they should not trust that Savior! It is as if Jacob had said, "Joseph is still alive, but I shall not trouble my head about him." Oh, no, no, no! The Patriarch does not talk like that, but he says, "Joseph is still alive; I will go and see him before I die." And, straightway, the poor old man and his household started to go down into Egypt–for the very next verse reads, "And Israel took his journey with all that he had."

One reason why Jacob wanted to go to Egypt was because he wished to see his son. Some of us know the delight of seeing, again, a dear son who has been absent from us for years, and of seeing him return. It is not so much a matter for us to talk about–it is rather a thing for our own hearts to rejoice over and to remember! And we often breathe the prayer, "God grant that we may see our beloved son again!" Yet, after all, to see a son is but the gratification of a natural affection–there is a great deal more

reason why we should, by faith, see our Savior, for he who truly sees the Son of God shall live forever! O dear Hearts–

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!"

A faith-look to God in human flesh, a believing sight of Him who bore our sins in His own body on the tree will bring you life forevermore! I think that every sinner who knows that there is a living Christ ought to say, "I will go and see Him, whatever else I do not go to see." There are some sights in the world of which we say, "I should like to go and see that." Well, you may forego all the things of beauty that ever charmed the eyes of men, but, I charge you, do not forego this sight of the Lord Jesus Christ! He is the Heaven of angels! He is the delight of God, Himself! There is no true life for you other than that which will come through your looking to Him who says, "Look to Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." Since you believe that there is a Savior, I pray that you may be moved at once to say, "I will go and see Him." May you be preserved from putting it off even till the daylight breaks again! This very hour, through your tears, look straight away to the Cross and may the Lord Jesus Christ reveal Himself to you, that in His light you may see the Light of God!

Further, this old man, who said, "I will go and see my son," yet felt that it was but for a little while. He says, "I will go and see him before I die." He had 17 more years to live, but he did not know that. He felt so old a man at 130 that he though it is only with my

dying eyes. I will die with the sight of Joseph before me and that will be enough to make me happy.“ And, dear Souls, if you did but get to Jesus, you might be happy if you could only say, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen Your salvation.” But it need not be death to you any more than it was to Jacob! Indeed, when you have seen Him, you shall live and never die! But your eyes shall be opened to see yet more and more of Him and the light of Christ shall so shine into your soul that you shall behold Him after a still more glorious fashion till He shall be the joy of your heart and the Heaven of your soul forever! Therefore, since there is such a living Savior, go to Him, I pray you, and you shall not merely see Him for a little while and then die, but you shall see Him and live forever! Therefore hasten by faith to see Him this very moment!

Old Jacob also felt that age should not hinder, but rather speed him. He believed that he was soon going to die, but he said, “I will go and see him before I die.” I think that Jacob’s age really made him go more quickly. “Ah,” he said to himself, “I shall soon be dead, therefore let me hasten down to Joseph, that I may see him before I die.” So, dear Friends, do not let anyone say, “I am too old to be saved.” Who is too old to trust Christ? Who is too old to seek and find the Savior? I have often heard stories told about people not being converted until after they are 55 or thereabouts–but that is all untrue and I do not believe a word of it! I have seen just as

many people in proportion converted at one age as at another. There are more young people in the world than there are aged persons and, therefore, there are more people converted, by God's Grace, while they are young. There are fewer old people than young ones, but I thank God that even in this building, I could point out a great many who I know who were baptized after their hair had grown gray! Some of them put their trust in Jesus when they were 70 years old and others even later than that!

There was a dear old Brother who came in here when he was past 80 years of age–and he found the Savior! He was such a Little-Faith, or Feeble-Mind, that he hardly dared to speak to any of us as he came in and out among us. But at last he said to himself, "I must join the Church." I fancy that he was 88 when he was baptized and he was so happy with us for about six months, but then he gently slipped away and went Home. I am sure I never saw a more childlike person, or a more genuine conversion than that of this dear old man! However old you are, Friend, come along! If Methuselah were here, I would preach to him the same Gospel that I would teach to one of these dear girls, for, however old a sinner is, there is nothing in the Gospel about limiting it to persons of a certain age. "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" does not mean, go and begin picking out the creatures, and saying, "I only preach the Gospel to people who are under a specified age." Go home, and go to bed, Sir, if that is how

you talk! Christ never sent you on such an errand as that! He sent us to preach the Gospel to every creature and to you who are almost worn out, if there is but life in you, I cry, “Come along, trust in Jesus, and He will save even you!”–

“While the lamp holds out to burn,

The vilest sinner may return”

and, returning, he shall find Christ! Be quick about it, however, you who are getting on in life, you who are far advanced in years, and may God bless you!

Yesterday I had many kind letters congratulating me on completing my 52 nd year, but there was one that did a littlesurprise and amuse me. One Brother writes that he has read my sermons for many years and that, at my advanced age, he cannot pray that I may have many returns of the day–but he does trust that God may spare me at least two or three years longer for the good of the Church! Well, as I read the letter, I could not help smiling, as you do, for I do not feel that I am quite as advanced in age as that. But still, I thought that, perhaps, this Brother’s letter might be prophetic. We may be older than we think we are–and two or three years may be all the time we are to have here. [Brother Spurgeon went Home less than six years later.] At any rate, I will try to work for Christ as earnestly as if I had only two or three years to live, and then it may be that He will add to us yet more,

but, if not, what does it matter? We shall go Home to Him who sent us and be gathered to our Father in peace.

Once more, old Jacob was not kept back from going to see his son because it was a long journey into Egypt. Journeys appear longer to old men than they do to young folk and it was a very great undertaking to go so far with those 70 and more people around him. There would be a deal of packing up to be done and there were no moving vans in those days to carry everything for the whole company. It was the transplanting of a grand old tree and it was a difficult task, to move so venerable an oak, with such wide-spreading roots and branches! Yet Jacob said, "I will go and see Joseph before I die." Now, dear Friend, if it does seem a long way to Jesus, yet undertake the journey! And if you can persuade your wife and all your children to go, so much the better. Christ will receive them all in Goshen and they shall dwell with Him forever! I wish that there might be a blessed migration of many who have been rooted to the soil of the old Canaan, the sinful place, who will now go, not down to Egypt, but up to Jesus in the land of plenty and of purity, to dwell with Him forever! That which ruins so many is that hesitancy, that delaying, that halting between two opinions which I find, in the original, is hopping upon two twigs and never resting upon either! Let not that be the case with you. Procrastination is the devil's net in which myriads are entangled to

their utter destruction–may the Lord deliver any of you who have been caught in it!

Decide for Christ now, I beseech you! May the Holy Spirit constrain you to decide at once, for Christ's sake! Amen. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"–241, 508, 607.

Ge 46:1-4 • The Unchanging God Cheering Jacob in His Change of Dwelling Place

SERMON 2116

T*he Unchanging God Cheering Jacob In His Change Of Dwelling Place*

"And Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke unto Israel in the visions of the night and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And He said, I am God, the God of your father: fear not to go down into Egypt. For I will there make of you a great nation: I will go down with you into Egypt. And I will also surely bring you up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon your eyes."

Genesis 46:1-4

NOTICE in this passage the two names which are mentioned. “Israel took his journey and God spoke unto Israel in the visions of the night and said, Jacob, Jacob.” “Jacob” was the name of his weakness–“Israel” was the title of his strength. “Jacob” was the name of his birth-nature–“Israel” was the name of his new and spiritual nature.

When Israel set out to go down into Egypt and see his son Joseph, he started in great vigor and strength for an old man–faith made him full of force. Therefore we read, “Israel took his journey.” I see the old man revived and stirred up to a high degree of hopeful energy. He traveled some few miles on the first day and reached the well of Beersheba. It was the border town, where stood the well of the oak–after passing Beersheba he would be out of the land of promise and on his way to Egypt.

And at the remembrance of this fact, the old trembling came over him and he became Jacob, as at some prior time. When he was to take the decisive step to leave Canaan and make his journey into Egypt, then he suddenly felt himself a Jacob and began to halt upon his thigh. And the Lord in the visions of the night addressed him by the name which was most suitable to his condition, saying to him, “Jacob, Jacob.” He did not call him “Israel.” He came to him in his infirmity and trial and suited His speech to his condition. The Lord met the weakness of His servant’s faith, and sent him consolations fitted rather for Jacob than for Israel.

Dear Friends, I am afraid that the lives of many of the Lord's chosen people alternate between "Israel" and "Jacob." Sometimes we are "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might," and at another time we cry, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Like princes we prevail with God and are true Israels. But perhaps before the sun has gone down we limp with Jacob and though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. We are Jacob before we are Israel. And we are Jacob when we are Israel.

But blessed be God, we are Israels with God when we cease to be Jacobs among men. The Lord has chosen Jacob and redeemed Jacob and preserved Jacob. But His great aim is to make the Israel in him the dominant character. He shall be far more a prince with God than a supplanter among men.

Turning to the text, we have a lesson to learn from it. We find that Jacob, on his way down to Egypt, came to Beersheba, the border place, and this marked a distinct stage in his journey. He came to Beersheba, the place of many memories, where God had spoken to his father Abraham by the well. This was the place, I suppose, where Abraham was when the Lord said to him, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and offer him for a burnt offering." It was, therefore, a memorable spot in the history of his family, and it was just then a turning point in his own career. And therefore it called for special waiting upon the Lord.

He was to break new ground and enter upon a way which he had not trod up to now. And so we read that he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. Herein is wisdom. In commencing a new era, let there be new devotion. It is well to begin everything with God, who is the Beginner of all things. When young people begin housekeeping they should consecrate an altar as soon as ever they have set up a tent. When you begin business, this thought should be upon you–"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

Therefore, wait upon Him for guidance and help. In starting upon every journey, whether long or short, and entering upon every day, however commonplace the day may be, it is always well to begin it with God. Remember the old and gracious Proverb, that "prayer and provender hinder no man's journey." The offering of sacrifices unto God did not hinder Jacob's journey–on the contrary, it was the making of him as a traveler. For now he began his journey outside of Canaan under the special convoy of the Lord, his God. Now the angels of God took up their places around the wayfarers and day and night they led the van and brought up the rear of the patriarchal caravan.

I suppose that Jacob, on this occasion, offered sacrifice for three reasons, at least. One was to purge his household of any sin that might lie upon it. He had a very strange family, this man Jacob. It was badly begun at the outset, of four mothers–and jealousies were

sure to abound. Taking them all round, his many sons were a very sad lot to be the sons of such a man. His own account of them on his deathbed is most painful. Much sin, even of the blackest dye, had defiled that chosen family.

The stories of Reuben, Levi, Simeon, Judah, and others, are very dark. The aged head of the clan seems to say, with broken-hearted penitence, “Before we go down into this Egypt, let us offer sacrifice whereby our grievous sins may be put away, lest we provoke the Lord on the road.” It reminds us of father Job, when, after his children had fulfilled their days of feasting, he called them together and offered sacrifice, lest they might have sinned in their hearts and cursed God foolishly.

How often have we cause to suspect some secret backsliding, some careless omission, some transgression unperceived! It is well to go again to the cleansing fountain for fresh washing, to fly anew to the great sacrifice of Christ and renew our acquaintance with its cleansing power. O Lord, purify our households at this hour! Let our families and our Churches know anew the expiation for sin by which the conscience is purged from dead works, to serve the living and true God.

Do you not think that Jacob also offered this sacrifice for another reason? Did he not present it by way of thanksgiving? He is going down into Egypt–but it is to see Joseph–what a joy this meant! Joseph is yet alive. He is going to look him in the face. Benjamin,

of whom the old man had said, “Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away”–Benjamin had come back safe and sound–this was no mean favor. Whereas he had said, “All these things are against me,” now he perceives that all these things are for him.

And so he offers sacrifice unto the Lord. Let us magnify the Lord whenever we are led to see the extraordinary light of His goodness in those places which looked unusually dark. When the cloud we so much dreaded has turned out to be big with mercies and has scattered showers of blessings upon our heads, let us bless the Lord and bring our sacrifices of joy and praise unto His name.

Surely, these two alone would be right good reasons for offering sacrifice. But Jacob had this other–that he might enquire of the Lord as to His way. At the altar he hoped to receive the oracle. Poor old Jacob appears to have been in a great dilemma–he seems to have greatly questioned whether it was right for him to go down into Egypt. And, as I shall have to show you, it was a matter that was open to grave question and could not have been safely decided unless the Lord had spoken.

It was the custom with men, when they offered sacrifice, to use the occasion of the sacrifice as an opportunity for consulting the oracles of God and learning His Divine will. People went up to the temple of the Lord to enquire His mind–they went to ask direction from God’s mouth, through His servants–who spoke in His name. I

wish sometimes that God's people would be more careful to ask their way of God. I fear that they too often err by blundering on and taking no heed to their way.

When I get into a part of the country where I do not know the road, I ask my way of almost everybody I see, because I think that there will not be half the time spent in asking the way that will be wasted in going wrong. The Lord loves to see His children anxious to be right. For that anxiety is a great point in their right guidance. If He does not speak to us in a dream, nor by the Urim and Thummim, nor by the voice of a Prophet, yet He secretly guides our minds.

We are made careful–we are helped to weigh the matter in the balances of the sanctuary and then our cool, calm judgment makes its decisions and we choose the way which is most for God's glory. It is a safe and a pleasant thing to enquire in His temple. For God the Holy Spirit still directs the paths of His people and leads them in the way everlasting.

So let us learn from Jacob, especially at the beginning of any fresh enterprise, to draw near unto God with special devotion. We cannot too often remember that great Sacrifice by which we live–neither can we too often present ourselves as living sacrifices unto the Lord.

But now, plunging into the center of the text, I notice, first, that Jacob had a fear. His fear was natural. But, secondly, his fear

needed to be removed, for God said to him, “Fear not to go down into Egypt.” And, thirdly, his fear was removed most sweetly. And with confidence, the venerable man went on his way.

First, then, JACOB’S FEAR WAS NATURAL. It was natural because he was an aged man–an aged man leaving the land of his birth. Old men do not like changes and they especially fear changes of country and custom. A young man runs all over the world and cares little where he goes, for he has plenty of youth’s quicksilver in him. He cries, “Sitting hens get no barley”–and so he pecks up a grain here and a grain there, from Liverpool to New York, and from New York to San Francisco, and from there to New Zealand, the Cape, and home again.

The young man makes himself at home anywhere. But the old man loves the old house at home and the fireside where his children have been likely to gather. Old trees strike their roots deep and it is not easy to transplant them. It is neither pleasant nor safe to uproot an ancient elm–let it stay where it is. Solomon says concerning the old man, that he is “afraid of that which is high and fears shall be in the way.” And it is very natural, indeed, that the man should feel a great disturbance in his mind at the sight of high enterprises and untrod ways.

Was not Jacob one hundred and thirty years old, or thereabouts, at the time when he went down into Egypt? He had lived, in the pastures of Canaan with his flocks and herds, the life of a Bedouin

shepherd, and his whole soul clung to the country. For “Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents.” The oaks and the plains of Mamre, the hills of Carmel and the valleys of Succoth were dear to him and he started at the idea of emigrating to a land of canals and watercourses, and he dreaded life among educated Egyptians and pompous officers of Pharaoh. It was no slight change from Canaan to Egypt. Do you wonder that he was afraid?

His fear also, no doubt, arose, next, from the fact that he was going into an idolatrous country of which he knew very little, except that it was a place which teemed with the memorials of false deities. A land of religion so degraded that cats and crocodiles were worshipped and even vegetables which grew in the gardens. An Egyptian must have been a living riddle to an unsophisticated shepherd from such a country as Palestine. Egypt had a reputation for learning and philosophy and divination. And these, to an aged countryman, would seem mysterious and uncanny features in his venture.

He loved not the change. The Canaanites were bad enough. But he had grown accustomed to them and they had a healthy fear of him–these Egyptians, what might they not do? He was encouraged, because Joseph was there and was lord over all Egypt–even that was a very romantic affair and the whole business was surrounded with mystery.

Finally, the associations of Egypt were trying. It had cost the good old man many bitter pangs to send his sons down into that country to buy corn. Egypt had an ugly name for him. It was like sending them to Botany Bay, or Norfolk Island. Somehow, it was not a country that he had any liking for, and so Jacob's heart was in his mouth. And he trembled to think that in his old age he should be going away from where he had lived and especially to be going, not to the ancient country from where his family had originally come forth, but to Egypt, a place which was of ill savor to his fathers, a country whose associations were rather trying than hopeful.

Abraham went down into Egypt and he met with trouble there and brought away from it one named Hagar, who was a great trial in his household. In fact, it was the mischievous event in his life. And Isaac had thought of going there but the Lord appeared unto him and said, "Go not down into Egypt." So a country where his grandfather fared ill and where his father was warned not to go, must have seemed, to the anxious Patriarch, to be a place to be avoided rather than sought.

He shook his head many times and though he had said so bravely, "Joseph is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die," the journey wore the aspect of great risk and tremendous difficulty–with a question hanging over it like a black cloud–"After all, would it be a right step?" Taking all things into consideration, he was filled with

a very natural, and I think I may add, a very proper fear. Would not you have trembled had you been in his position?

Moreover, he had some intimation, probably, that this was to be a land of pre-eminent trial for his race. For had not God said to Abraham that his seed should be strangers in a strange land and that they should be afflicted for four hundred years? The old man, with prescient eye, began to suspect that this was to be the land which caused Abraham the horror of great darkness, which was set forth before him as the fiery furnace and the smoking lamp. And so he was afraid to go down into Egypt.

And even though Joseph was there, and Joseph was lord over all the land, I should not wonder if the old man was nervous and said, "Joseph may not always be lord over the land–he may fall from his position. As far as I can find out, they put him in prison once. Why should they not put him in prison again? I fear we shall run a great risk." When we once get into the vein of distrust and foreboding, we can always find fresh relays of doubt and fear–at least, I can. How quick we are at inventing objects of fear! We see in the clouds what was never there but only in our own eyes. We see things which may be–things that never will be. We are fretted at possibilities and ready to faint at adventures. Those dreadful things may be. And what if they were to be? What then and what then?

Then I have no doubt he felt that the change would involve himself and his family in new temptations. They had behaved badly

enough among the simple pastoral people–what would they do in the midst of the vices of Egypt? I must confess that I often feel great diffidence in recommending people to make changes in life–especially in quitting the country to go to the great city. Change has its perils. You begin to know your temptations by now and you are somewhat prepared to withstand them. But you know not what may happen to you in another sphere, with other surroundings, and other influences.

All things considered, I would rather carry my old burden. For it begins to fit my back and my back has grown somewhat used to it. But what about a new burden? It might be more heavy and it might try me in fresh places and cause fresh wounds. For myself, I am not anxious to make any changes, for I have read the words of Solomon the wise–"As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man that wanders from his place."

When God commands a man to follow an untried path, he may go rightly and wisely, even as the young swallows fly in their appointed time, though they have never traversed the continents before. But he who wanders out of sheer wantonness may find that he has gone from bad to worse and may come to wish himself back again to that which he despised.

If Jacob trembled at making so great a change, it was not without reason. All the habits of the family would be rudely shaken, and a new mode of life would be forced upon them. He could not have

guessed that there would be a Goshen for the shepherds, and he must have dreaded leaving a quiet pastoral life for the refinements of Egyptian society and the blandishments of Egyptian idolatry.

I need say no more on that point–Jacob was always anxious, and in his old age, more so than ever. The sketch I have given may be the picture of some friend now present. And if it is so, I will hope that in my discourse he may hear cheering voices from the Lord God to allay his fears. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, make it so!

II. But, in the second place, God was not of a mind that His servant should be the slave of dread–HIS FEAR WAS TO BE REMOVED. Therefore, the Lord appeared to Jacob in the night visions, not to tell him of new empires, not to reveal to him the destinies of princes but simply to say to him, "Fear not."

It appears to God to be an important matter to chase away fear, even though it is troubling only one person and that person an aged man. The Lord broke the eternal silence, to drive away the anxieties of a single individual. He said to him, "Jacob, Jacob." And then he added, "Fear not to go down into Egypt." Are you very fearful and timorous at this time, dear Brother? It is not the Lord's will that you should remain so–He would deliver you from this bondage.

The Lord would drive away your fears because, in the first place, fear makes you unhappy. It is an unhappy thing for a father when

he comes home from business and finds his child in distress of mind. He likes to see him run cheerfully to meet him and smile and sing a welcome. Our heavenly Father would have His people rejoice in Him. Do you want any proof of it? Does He not command you, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice”? The Lord puts it thus, “Delight yourself also in the Lord. And He shall give you the desires of your heart.” The Spirit made the Prophet exclaim, “Happy are you, O Israel.” God takes it ill if His people find no joy in Him. He is our portion and it is sad if we are not delighted with such an inheritance.

But, next, the Lord would not have His people vexed with fear, because it is sadly weakening in its effects. Jacob had a difficult task enough, to go down into Egypt and bear witness for the true God in that region, and he needed more, rather than less, strength. In the midst of Canaan, his path had been a very difficult one, to stand fast for God in the midst of that wicked and perverse generation. He had sadly failed even in that lesser task, for his family had grossly transgressed and fallen into the ways of the world around them.

In Egypt his work would be more severe. For he would have the wisdom of the Egyptians to battle with, a wisdom proudly conservative of errors which had become hoary with antiquity. He must not go down to such a battlefield with his hands hanging down and his knees feeble. Before we begin a new enterprise, fear

may be seasonable–we ought to be cautious as to whether our way is right in the sight of God. And therefore Jacob had that fear. But when we once begin and intend going through with an enterprise, we must say farewell to fear, for fear will be fatal to success.

Go straight ahead. Believe in God and carry the work through. To fear in the day of battle will be mischievous to the last degree. Then shall it be as when a standard bearer faints. When the standard of our confidence falls in the dust, who shall gird himself for the battle? Therefore the Lord, that His servant Jacob might be fit for what was before him, bade him be of good courage and said to him, "Fear not."

I am sure that the Lord wished His servant Jacob to cease from every kind of fear, because otherwise it would look as if he were quarrelling with the Divine will. He is to go down into Egypt by Divine command. But if he is afraid to go, it would appear that he judged that the Lord had put him upon an ill business. When God judged it right for him to go, he must rest assured that it was right. Hesitate, my dear Friend, while you are not sure that it is God's will. But when once you are certain that it is according to the Lord's mind, it will be unfaithfulness to God to have any kind of fear.

Steam straight ahead, for that way lies your haven. Go on in a direct line, like an arrow shot from a mighty bow, which seeks nothing but the target. Say with one of old, "Shall such a man as I

flee?" If God is with you, who can be against you? Flight, when God supports, would be not only disastrous, but treacherous. It is not to be dreamed of for a moment. You have no armor for your back–face the foe–yes, face him, though he were ten thousand strong. You are able to overcome the armies of the aliens. God being with you, the day is yours.

If you treat the Lord as you should, you will become incapable of fear. You will, like young Nelson, ask, "What is fear?" You cannot see any. "The Lord is my strength; of whom shall I be afraid?" The Lord of Hosts is with us, therefore we will not fear. Perhaps I might as well apply the subject now and say–Are you beginning to preach, my dear Friend, in a new place and are you afraid? Do new faces startle you? Set yourself to get rid of this fear of man. The Lord forbids it.

Are you going across the sea directly and are you afraid of the journey and the foreign land? Hasten to the Lord and ask Him to drive all this fear far from you. Are you undertaking some new service in the Church and are you trembling at the responsibility? Cry to the Lord at once to strengthen your weak hands and confirm your feeble knees. For, at this moment, though the Lord does not appear to you in vision, yet He speaks to you out of this grand old Book and by the mouth of His servant, saying unto you, "Fear not to go down into Egypt." Surely, a "fear not" from the mouth of the Lord will make you bold as a lion!

III. And now I shall need to show you how HIS FEAR WAS REMOVED MOST SWEETLY. Who can cheer the heart so effectually as the Lord our God? Fears must depart when the Lord forbids them.

First, the Lord removed his fears by showing that He knew him by his name. He said "Jacob, Jacob." "Oh," says one, "if the Lord were to speak to me by my name I should not be afraid any longer." I am not sure of that, for you might be even more fearful than you now are. But do you think that God does not know your name? Do you dream that if you have sought His face and cried to Him for mercy He does not know your name? Why Beloved, He knows all things. He knows your secret thoughts. He knows the way that you have taken and the way that you are about to take.

He knows you infinitely better than you know yourself. Rest in the fact that your heavenly Father knows what you have need of. O poor troubled One, you that are cast down on account of sin, remember that the Lord knew this Patriarch by his weak and sinful name of Jacob, as well as by his bright and princely name of Israel. He knew him by his worse name as well as by his better. God knows you by your old name, for He knows your old nature. And He knows your new name and your new nature. He calls you tonight and tells you–"I know you. I know you. I know all about you. Your name is engraved on the palms of My hands.

“Dream not that I have forgotten you. If you can not spell out your own case, I can read it. If you do not know your own griefs so as to interpret them to another, I understand all your sorrows, your burdens and your failures. I know your despondencies and your despairs. I know you, Jacob.” Therefore, since the Lord knows us altogether, let us trust Him and He will make even our weaknesses to magnify the power of His Grace.

Next, the Lord told him that he was on communion terms with God. The Lord said to him, “Jacob, Jacob,” and he answered, “Here am I.” God had to call out to Adam, “Adam, where are you?” But Jacob could say, “Here am I.” Oh, it is a blessed thing to be on such terms with God that you can truly say, “Here am I, my Lord–I have nothing to hide. I stand forth before Your presence and have no desire to conceal myself from Your eyes, neither have I anything to reserve from Your notice. Tell me what I am to do. For I am willing and eager to do it. Take me and make what You will of me. For I am Yours and rejoice to be so. Break me up and melt me and pour me out into Your mold, if You see fit. For ‘Here am I.’ ”

He that has given up selfhood and is willing that God should do whatever He wills with him, is on communing terms with God. The barrier is removed and the Lord God Almighty can dwell with us and even give us the desires of our heart. But then it follows–if you are on such happy terms with God, be not afraid. Now that you may speak with God and He will deign to speak with you, why

should you be the prey of apprehensions? Why should Jacob be afraid of Pharaoh if he is no longer afraid of Jehovah? If you are at peace with God, who is he that shall harm you? The stones of the field shall be in league with you and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you.

Hushed is the thunder and pointless is the shaft of the lightning, when once a man is right with God. Even if the laws of nature should crush his mortal frame, they would but release his joyful spirit and admit him the sooner to the joys of Heaven above. Therefore you have nothing to be afraid of, O you who walk with God! If the Lord is your Friend, who ishe that can harm you? All is well. The stars in their courses fight for you and the angels of God watch over you. To the friends of God all nature is friendly. Heaven and earth, and sea and land, all welcome the man on whom their Creator smiles.

Next, the Lord removed His servant's fear by declaring Himself to be the God of the Covenant. "I am God," He said, "the God of your father." He manifests Himself as the same God as ever–as much the God of Jacob, the son, as of Isaac, the father. The Lord will be to us what He has been to His people at some prior time. He has pledged Himself to us as to our fathers. He has promised to us, even to us, the blessing, saying, "Surely, blessing I will bless you."

My dear Friends and Brethren, can you say, "This God is our God forever and ever"? Is Jehovah the God of this generation as of the

former? Some of you do not desire to have Jehovah for your God. Then you cannot have the blessing that comes from His being your God. But you that can say, "My God, my Father, You shall be my Guide," you have no cause to fear. If God is your God, the chief thing is secured and all the rest will be right. When we have God, we have all things. To be in order with the Most High is to be right with all the forces of the universe, both in nature and in Providence.

If the Lord is yours, all things are yours. As He is the God of eternity, "things present and things to come are yours" in Him. Oh, how sweet to fly to our Covenant God when the tempest is lowering! Where my father found a most secure abode, there I also dwell.

Next, the Lord said to him, "Fear not to go down into Egypt. For I will there make of you a great nation." The promise of a great blessing is the dismissal of all fear. Jacob's house cannot be destroyed if God is going to multiply them into a great nation. If the apparent evil will work together for our good, why do we dread it? Beloved Sufferer, do not be afraid of the cancer which is preying upon you. It is a terrible disease. But if the Lord is going to make your long illness a saving blessing to your family, you may resign yourself to the lingering pain and no longer shrink from it with horror.

Do not be afraid of that bereavement in the family. It will be a grievous loss to all concerned, but the righteous are taken away from evil to come, and out of their graves springs a blessing, even as the grass grows on the hillock in the Churchyard. Many a keen affliction brings with it God's sevenfold favor, though we cannot see it. As the Lord said to Jacob, "Fear not to go into Egypt. For I will there make of you a great nation," so He says to us, "Fear not affliction. For so shall you receive the greater benediction."

Brethren, fear not the night but watch for its stars. Fear not the fall of the leaf but look for the ripe fruits. You shall see more of God's goodness as you see more of man's evil. We read of the Apostles, that they "feared as they entered into the cloud." Yet in that cloud they saw their Lord transfigured. Therefore be not afraid, lest you be found trembling at that which should cause you joy.

Then the Lord added that which is the richest comfort of all–"I will go down with you into Egypt." What cause of fear can remain when we have the promise of the Lord's Presence with us? The child is not afraid to go to bed in the dark, if his mother will go with him into the chamber. The child does not want a candle if his mother will be at his side. Her eyes are bright lights to him. If God is with us, we are not in the dark–His Presence causes even the night to be light about us. If we can have our Lord's Presence, we have no choice of country or company.

Egypt, with Jehovah, is as Canaan. Even Hades and the land of death-shades have nothing to make us fear evil, if the Comforter sustains us. “For You are with me,” is the joyful song of the pilgrim when he passes through the valley of the shadow of death. Therefore, let us dismiss our fears. We will go down into loneliness, poverty, sickness, sorrow, and the grave, if the Lord will be with us.

The Lord goes on to say, “And I will also surely bring you up again”–which meant that Jacob should not lose his inheritance in Canaan, nor be forever in banishment in a strange land. Jacob’s heart dwelt in the Canaan which the Lord had bestowed on him and had entailed upon his seed by a covenant of salt. But Jacob’s going down into Egypt was not to alter that deed of gift. Jacob would not have accepted Egypt, with all its treasures, in exchange for the land that God had promised to himself and to his seed. But no such change was proposed–the chosen seed would leave Egypt in due course and come back to its old quarters and so the Lord said, “I will surely bring you up again.”

Go down as we may, the Lord will bring us up again. Dear Friend, you may lose husband, or wife, or father, or child, or property, or health, or even life. But you shall rise out of every loss and you shall never lose your share in the sure mercies of David. “Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?” Esau might sell the heritage for a mess of pottage

but Jesus would not sell His portion for all Egypt's glories. Nor shall He be called on to make the exchange. Blessed be God, we shall never be driven down so low that we cannot rise again, for the Lord says of every member of the chosen family, "I will surely bring you up again!"

One more fear Jacob had, perhaps, experienced. He had some fear of dying. But that was all removed when the Lord said, "And Joseph shall put his hand upon your eyes." "Oh," the good old father thought, "Joseph is to close my eyes. Then death has lost its sting." Did you ever think of dying in that light? Let me read it to you with a word changed and another name inserted–"And Jesus shall put His hand upon your eyes." We may never die–the Lord may personally appear and then we shall not all sleep. But if He does not come and we are called upon to die, Jesus will put His fingers on our eyes and we shall sleep in peace.

Death is a Covenant blessing to a child of God. For "so He gives His beloved sleep." That last sleep comes from the finger of that hand which was nailed to the cross for us. And Jesus, your Joseph whom you love, whose bloody coat you have seen with tears–He is yet alive and He is King over all that land where you go, for the keys of death swing at His girdle. He is the Prince of all realms and He it is that shall put His hand upon your eyes and seal them for the moment in darkness, to open them for you, when you shall say, "I am satisfied, for behold I awake in Your likeness."

By this time, every fear ought to be removed from us, even as it was from Jacob. We may now set up our banners and go forward. Put away the sackbut and sound the silver trumpet. Let the vanguard advance and follow the leader through the wilderness, or through the sea. If Jehovah leads the way, let no man's heart tremble. Let the weakest among us be strong–for thus says the Lord, "Fear not to go down into Egypt." Rejoice and be glad. All is well–

"What cheering words are these!
Their sweetness who can tell?
In time and to eternal days,
It is with the righteous well.
It is well when joys arise,
It is well when sorrows flow,
It is well when darkness veils the skies,
And strong temptations blow.
It is well when on the mount
We feast on dying love;
And 'tis as well, in God's account,
When we the furnace prove."

The pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day, we see at all times. Thus Jehovah leads the way in every march through the desert. With glad footstep, follow Him. Behold, He says to you, "Fear not to go down into Egypt. For I will go down with you and I

will surely bring you up again." Surely, this passage is very applicable to all who are removing from one place to another. "Fear not to go down into Egypt. I will go down with you into Egypt." Take your journey in peace.

This also may be used by those who are in perplexity as to what they should do. Wait upon God for direction and when you get your marching orders, go straight ahead, cheered by this gracious assurance, "I will go down with you into Egypt." Any of you that are entering upon a new business, upon new trials, new labors, new spheres–accept with joy the promise that the Presence of God will be with you. God leading, we fear nothing.

Lastly, to you that are about to die, here is living consolation. There may be some here who will never see another earthly Sabbath, for God has some better thing in store for them, namely, to see the heavenly Sabbath sooner than they think. Fear not to go down into the Egypt of the grave, for the Lord will go down with you into the sepulcher. Jesus has been there–fear not to go where He went. Whenever I am called in to see any of our dying Church members, I find them, without exception, calm and willing to depart. When I come out of the dying chamber I invariably feel that my faith has been greatly strengthened.

The way in which they meet the approach of the great enemy, calmly and triumphantly, makes me rest joyfully confident in the Gospel which I preach. Our dear Friends sing and even shout

joyously in death. One Brother, who passed away not long ago, even made me laugh by the joyous things he told me in his own quaint way. I could not help laughing for joy when he talked about Heaven as if he had been there. There is a dear Brother, not many doors from this spot, who will probably soon pass away. But he speaks about his departure as calmly as if he were only going to the seaside for a holiday. Our Lord's love has changed the very aspect of death's face.

My dear Brother and co-pastor said to me one day, "O Brother, our people die well, do they not?" That they do. They give us proof of the Truth of God which we preach by the way in which it sustains them in their last hours. Without the slightest fear, or perturbation of mind, they march onward to the Jordan singing with the stream in view. I know no happier people in my acquaintance than a certain suffering few, who are within measurable distance of the Celestial City. And so it ought to be.

But what is to become of you who have no faith? What is to become of you who have no God to go to? O Soul, if you have no God, you are, indeed, miserable. God bring you at once to Himself, through Jesus Christ His Son! Amen.

Ge 48:15 • A Bit of History for Old and Young

SERMON 1972

A *Bit Of History For Old And Young*

"And he blessed Joseph and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads."

Genesis 48:15, 16

JOSEPH was one by himself. In Jacob's family he was like a swan in a duck's nest–he seemed to be of a different race from the rest, even from his childhood. He was the son of old age, the son of the elders, that is, a child who was old when he was young, in thoughtfulness and devotion. He reached an early ripeness which did not end in early decay. In consequence of this, Joseph was one

by himself in the peculiarity of his trials. Through his brothers' hatred of him, he was made to suffer greatly and, at last, was sold into slavery and underwent trials in Egypt of the severest kind. “The archers have sorely grieved him and shot at him, and hated him.” But, Brothers and Sisters, see the recompense, for he had blessings which were altogether his own. “His bow abode in strength and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.” He was as distinguished by the favor of God as by the disfavor of his brothers.

When Jacob is old and about to die, Joseph receives from him a blessing all to himself, in addition to that which he received with his brothers. In the 49 th chapter we read, “Gather yourselves together, and hear, you sons of Jacob: andhearken unto Israel, your father.” And they did so and received as a family such blessings as their father’s prophetic eyes foresaw. But before this, “by faith, Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph” at a private interview especially granted to them. Had not his tribulations abounded, his consolations would not so have abounded! Do you seem, yourself, my Friend, to be marked out for peculiar sorrows? Do the arrows of affliction make your life their target and are you chastened above all other men? Do not be regretful, for the arrows are winged by Covenant Love which designs, by their wounds, are to prepare you for a special work which will lead up to a special benediction from your Father who is in Heaven!

The day will come when you will be grateful for every smart you now endure–yes, grateful for that bitter pang of unkindness from your brothers, though now it tortures your heart. The abundance of the Revelation of God is usually joined with a thorn in the flesh either before or after it. Notwithstanding your grief, there shall yet be born to you, as to Joseph, a Manasseh, for God shall make you forget all your toil, and an Ephraim, for God shall make you fruitful in the land of your affliction. You shall be blessed above all others! "Even by the God of your father, who shall help you; and by the Almighty, who shall bless you with blessings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: the blessings of your father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren."

Surely it is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth–his shoulders shall be the better able to bear the government when God shall lay it upon them! Instructed by affliction, the man shall become a father to his people and a comforter to the afflicted.

Our text tells us that Jacob blessed Joseph and we perceive that he blessed him through blessing his children which leads us to the next remark, that no more choice favor could fall upon ourselves than to see our children favored of the Lord. Joseph is doubly blessed by seeing Ephraim and Manasseh blessed. Dear young

people, to whom I now speak, your fathers can say, “We have no greater joy than this, that our children walk in the Truth of God.” If any of you who are unconverted knew the deep searching of heart of your parents about you, I think you would not long be careless and indifferent about Divine things. And if you could conceive the flashes of heavenly joy that would light up your parents' hearts if they saw you saved in the Lord, it would be an inducement to you to consider your ways and turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart. God, Himself, next to giving to His chosen the Covenant of Grace, can do them no greater earthly kindness than to call their children, by His Grace, into the same Covenant! Will you not think of this?

Those of us who are parents are bound to do our best that our children may be partakers with us of the Divine inheritance. As Joseph took Ephraim and Manasseh to see their aged grandfather, let us bring our children where blessings may be expected. Let us be careful of the company into which we take our sons and daughters. Let us never conduct them where they may receive harm rather than benefit. Carefully, lovingly, wisely–using no undue severity–let us guide them into likely places for the Divine benediction and encourage them to seek the blessing for themselves by the fact that their parents are seeking it for them. The father who will not seize every opportunity of getting a blessing for his Ephraim and Manasseh is not likely to see the lads seeking the

blessing for themselves. Especially should this care be taken by parents who are growing rich–whose offspring will be tempted by this very fact to seek grander society than the poor people of God can afford them.

I doubt not that these two sons of Egypt's prime minister were exposed to exceedingly great temptations. As the sons of a very wealthy and distinguished parent, their tastes might lie in an Egyptian direction. I believe that they were, nevertheless, greatly swayed to the right side and led to worship the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, by the zeal of their father, Joseph, and by the recollection of the benediction of their dying grandfather. There is no trace of their having inclined to the religion of the king and the nobles of Egypt–they adhered to the faith of their father. Oh that all the descendants of Puritan fathers might be steadfast to the pure Truth of God in these evil days!

Furthermore, observe that if we want to bless young people, one of the likeliest means of doing so will be our personal testimony to the goodness of God. Young men and women usually feel great interest in their fathers' life story–if it is a worthy one–and what they hear from them of their personal experience of the goodness of God will abide with them. We all read biographies and we value the results of experience which we find there, but the biographies of our own relatives are peculiarly treasured. And when these biographies are not read, but spoken, what wonderful force they

have! I remember in my younger days hearing a minister, blind with age, speak at the communion table and bear witness to us young people who had just joined the Church, that it was well for us that we had come to put our trust in a faithful God. And, as the good man, with great feebleness and yet with great earnestness, said to us that he had never regretted that he had given his heart to Christ as a boy, I felt my heart leap within me with delight that I had such a God to be my God!

His testimony was such as a younger man could not have borne–he might have spoken more fluently, but the weight of those 80 years at the back of it made the old man eloquent to my young heart! We who are growing gray in our Master's service ought not to be backward to speak well of His name. Why, my Brother, you will not be able to do so much good in Heaven as you can on earth, for they all know about it up there–but men here need our witness to the God whom we have tried and proved! Let us make occasions in which we may speak well of the Lord, even the God who has fed us all our life and redeemed us from all evil. This is one of the best ways in which to bless the lads. The benediction of Jacob was intertwined with his biography–the blessing which he had, himself, enjoyed, he wished for them–and as he invoked it, he helped to secure it by his personal testimony.

One thing further. I want you to note that Jacob, in desiring to bless his grandsons, introduced them to God. He speaks of "God

before whom my fathers did walk: God who blessed me all my life long." This is the great distinction between man and man! There are two races–he that fears God and he that fears Him not. The religion of this present age, such as it is, has a wrong direction in its course. It seeks after what is called "the enthusiasm of humanity," but what we need, far more, is enthusiasm for God! We shall never go right unless God is first, midst and last. I despair for benevolence when it is not based upon devotion. We shall not long have love to man if we do not first and chiefly cultivate love to God. What our boys need in starting in life is a God–if we have nothing else to give them, they have enough if they have God! What our girls need in quitting the nurture of home is God's love in their hearts–and whether they have fortunes or not, is a small matter! In fellowship with God lies the essence of true human life! Life in God, life by the knowledge of the Most High, life through the Redeeming Angel–this is life, indeed!

Jacob died as one who had been delivered from all evil, yes, even the evil of old age. His eyes were dim, but that did not matter, for his faith was clear. I love to think that we are going where our vision of God will not be through the eyes, but through the spiritual perceptions. These were brighter in Jacob in his old age than ever before. His faith and love, which are the earthly forms of those perceptions, were apprehending God in a more forcible manner than ever and, therefore, signified little that the eyes which he

would need no longer were failing him. We cannot say that he was in decay, after all, for he was losing what he only needed in this world of shadows–and was gaining fitness for the higher state! His gracious faculties grew as his bodily faculties declined and, therefore, he felt that his life was ending in a fullness of blessing such as he wished for the children of his dearest son. How ardently do I wish the same blessing for all the young people before me! The Lord God Almighty bless you! When your earth-born faculties fail you, may heavenly Graces more than supply their place!

All this is introduction, so now we must come at once and plunge into the discourse! And I will be brief upon each point of it. Jacob's testimony, wherewith he blessed the sons of Joseph, has in it four points.

First, HE SPEAKS OF ANCESTRAL MERCIES. He begins with that "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk." As with a pencil he sketches the lives of Abraham and Isaac. He does not fill in with coloring, but the outline is perfect–you see the two men in their whole career in those few words–"God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk."

They were men who recognized God and worshipped Him beyond all others of their age. God was to them a real existence. They spoke with God and God spoke with them. They were friends of God and enjoyed familiar acquaintance with him. No agnosticism blinded their understandings and deadened their hearts.

They were worshippers of the one living and true God. Happy children who have such fathers! Happier children who are like such fathers!

They not only recognized God, but they acknowledged Him in daily life. I take the expression, "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk," to mean that He was their God in common life. They not only knelt before God when they prayed, but they walked before Him in everything. When they went forth from their tents and when they returned from their flocks, they walked before God. They were never away from His service, or without His Presence. He was their dwelling place. Whether they sojourned under an oak or dwelt by a well. Whether they entertained strangers or walked in the field to meditate, they lived and moved in God. This is the kind of life for you and for me–whether we live in a great house or in a poor cottage, if we walk before God we shall lead a happy and a noble life–whether that life is public or obscure. Oh that our young people would firmly believe this!

They walked before God, that is, they obeyed His commands. His call they heard, His bidding they followed. Abraham left country and kindred to go to an unknown land which God would show him. Yes, more, he took his son, whom he greatly loved, and stood prepared to sacrifice him at God's command! Isaac also yielded himself up to be slain, if so Jehovah willed. To them the will of the

Lord was paramount–He was Law and Life to them, for they loved and feared Him. They were prompt to hear the behests of God and rose up early to fulfill them. They acted as in the immediate Presence of the All-Seeing.

To the fullest they trusted Him. In this sense they always saw Him. We sometimes talk about tracing Him. We cannot trace Him except as we trust Him! And because they trusted, they traced Him. Notwithstanding all the danger and difficulty of their pilgrim state, they dwelt in perfect security in an enemy's land, for the Lord had said, "Touch not My anointed and do My Prophets no harm." They were serene and tranquil because they walked before God, knowing Him to be their Friend–and that He was their shield and their exceedingly great reward. For temporal things they had no anxiety, for they lived upon the All-Sufficient God. Therefore these two men, Abraham and Isaac, though much tried, led peaceful lives–they conversed with Heaven while they sojourned on earth.

They enjoyed the favor of God, for this, also, is intended by walking before Him. His face was towards them–they sunned themselves in His smile. God's love was their true treasure. We read that God had blessed Abraham in all things and of Isaac we hear even the Philistines say, "We saw certainly that the Lord was with you." God was their wealth, their strength, their exceeding joy! I say again, happy sons who have such ancestors! Happier, still, if they follow in their track!

So Jacob spoke of Abraham and Isaac and so can some of us speak of those who went before us. Those of us who can look back upon godly ancestors now in Heaven must feel that many ties bind us to follow the same course of life. Had they transgressed against the Lord, our duty would have called us to quit the ways of the family, even as Abraham left his kindred who dwelt on the other side of the flood. But as their way was right, we are doubly called to follow it because it is the good old way and the way our godly fathers trod.

There is a charm about that which was prized by our fathers. Heirlooms are treasured and the best heirloom in a family is the knowledge of God. When I spoke, the other day, with a Christian Brother, he seemed right happy to tell me that he sprang from a family which came from Holland during the persecution of the Duke of Alva. And I felt a brotherhood with him in claiming a like descent. I dare say our fathers were poor weavers, but I had far rather be descended from one who suffered for the faith than bear the blood of all the emperors within my veins! There should be a sacredness to you young people in the faith for which your ancestors suffered. Choose not the society of Egypt and its wealth and honors, but keep to the stock of Israel and claim the inheritance of Jacob as Ephraim and Manasseh did. Let it not be said that as your family increased in riches, it departed from the living God. Shall the goodness of God be perverted into a reason for apostasy?

The way of holiness in which your fathers went is a fitting way for you and it is seemly that you maintain the godly traditions of your house. In the old times they expected sons to follow the secular calling of their fathers and although that may be regarded as an old-world mistake, yet it is well when sons and daughters receive the same spiritual call as their parents. Grace is not tied to families, yet the Lord delights to bless to a thousand generations! Very far are we from believing that the new birth is of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man. The will of God reigns here supreme and absolute–but yet there is a sweet fitness in the passing on of holy loyalty from grandfather to father and from father to son. I like to feel that I serve God "from my fathers." I feel that it is right and comely that I should be found preaching out of my whole soul the same doctrine which my grandfather and my father preached–and equally fit that my sons should be found, as they are, preaching no other Gospel than that which we have received–"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever!"

I say again, if our fathers were wrong, we ought boldly to dissent from them and obey God rather than man, but where they are right we are bound to follow them! I stood, last Wednesday in a sort of dream as I gazed upon my muchbeloved grandfather's place of sepulcher. I was encouraged by seeing the record of his 54 years of service in the midst of one church and people and I rejoiced that, could he rise from the dead, he would find his grandson preaching

that same old-fashioned and much-despised Calvinistic doctrine of the Grace of God which was his joy in life and his comfort in death!

A godly ancestry casts responsibility upon young people. These Ephraims and Manassehs perceive that their fathers knew the Lord and the question arises, Why should they not know Him? O my beloved young Friends, the God of your fathers will be found of you and be your God! The prayers of your fathers have gone before you–let them be followed by your own. Be hopeful of being heard at that Mercy Seat where they found Grace to help in every time of need. They died in the hope that you would fill their places–shall not their hopes become facts? Do I speak to some who have godly parents in Heaven and yet they are, themselves, pursuing the ways of sin or of worldliness? Registered upon that file are your mother's prayers. I trust they will yet be heard. Even now they stand like a hedge about you, making it hard work for you to go to Hell! Will you force your way to Hell over a father's grave? Will you, by a desperate effort, push aside your pleading mother's form and pursue your dreadful road to ruin? If so, you will involve yourselves in tremendous guilt. I beseech you, hear the tender voice of love which now invites you to be blest!

A godly ancestry should invest a man's case with great hopefulness. May he not argue, "If God blessed my ancestors, why should He not bless me? If they sought mercy and found it, why

should not I? My father and my mother were not perfect any more than I am, but they had faith in God and He accepted them and helped them. If I have faith in God, He will accept me and be faithful to me. They were saved as sinners trusting in the blood of Jesus and why should not I?" I beseech you, put this argument to the test and you will find it holds good.

II. Thus we have seen Jacob seeking to bless his seed by bearing testimony to the blessings which God had bestowed upon his house. Now he comes to deal with PERSONAL MERCIES. The old man's voice faltered as he said, "The God which fed me all my life long." The translation would be better if it ran, "The God which shepherded me all my life long."

He spoke of the Lord as his Shepherd. Jacob had been a shepherd and, therefore, he knew what shepherding included–the figure is full of meaning. There had been a good deal of Jacob about Jacob and he had tried to shepherd himself. Poor sheep that he was, while under his own guidance he had been caught in many thorns and had wandered in many wildernesses. Because he would be so much a shepherd to himself, he had been hard put to it. But over all, despite his willfulness, the shepherding of the Covenant God had been exercised towards him and he acknowledged it. O dear saints of God, you to whom years are being multiplied, give praise to your God for having been your Shepherd! You delight in the 23 rd Psalm–sing it sometimes with variations by using the past

tense–“The Lord has been my Shepherdand I have known no need. He has made me to lie down in green pastures; He has led me beside the still waters. Yes, though I have walked through the valley of the shadow of death in times of great darkness, yet I have feared no evil: for He has been with me, His rod and His staff have comforted me.” Bear your witness to the shepherding of God, for this may lead others to become the sheep of His pasture.

This shepherding had been perfect. Our version rightly says that the Lord had fed Jacob all his life long. Take that sense of it and you who have a daily struggle for subsistence will see much beauty in it. Jacob had a large family and yet they were fed. Some of you say, “It is all very well of you to talk of Providence when you have few to provide for.” I answer, it is better, still, to talk of Providence where a large household requires large provision! Remember Jacob had 13 children, yet his God provided them bread to eat and clothes to put on. None of that large company were left to starve. You think, perhaps, that Jacob was a man of large estate. He was not so when he began life. He was only a working man–a shepherd. When he left his father’s house he had no attendants with camels and tents. I suppose he carried his little bit of provision in a handkerchief and when he laid down that night to sleep, with a stone for his pillow, the hedges for curtains, the heavens for his canopy, and the earth for his bed, he had no fear of being robbed.

God was with him, but apart from that, he had nothing to begin life with but his own hands. Whatever he received from his father Isaac afterwards, he had at first to fight his own way–but he knew no lack either at the beginning or at the end, for he could speak of the great Elohim as, "the God which fed me all my life long." Hundreds of us can say the same! I remember one who came to be wealthy who used to show me with great pleasure the tree axle of the truck in which he used to wheel his goods through the streets when he began in business–I liked to see him mindful of his original. Mind you do not go and say, "See how I have got on by my own talents and industry!" Talk not so proudly, but say, "God has fed me." Mercies are all the sweeter when seen to come from the hand of God.

But besides being fed, Jacob had been led, even as sheep are guided by the shepherd who goes before them. His journeys, for that period, had been unusually long, perilous and frequent. He had fled from home to Padanaram. After long years he had come back to Canaan and had met his brother, Esau. And after that, in his old age he had journeyed into Egypt. To go to California or New Zealand in these times is nothing at all compared to those journeys in Jacob's day! But he says, "God has shepherded me all my life long" and he means that the great changes of his life had been wisely ordered. At home and in exile, in Canaan and in Goshen, God had been a shepherd to him. He sees the good hand of God

upon him in all his wanderings, until he now finds himself sitting up on his bed and blessing Joseph through his sons.

I am glad that he went into detail with these young men, for they needed to be confirmed in their fidelity to God. They were in a perilous condition, for they had the entree of the rank and fashion of Egypt and were tempted to forsake the poor family of the Hebrews. Some of you young fellows begin where your fathers left off and, having the means of self-indulgence, you are apt to follow the fashions and frivolities of the period. Oh that the Holy Spirit may make you feel that you need God with you with wealth as much as your fathers needed God without wealth! You may yet come to beggary with all your inheritance if you cast off the fear of the Lord and fall into sin. You who begin life with nothing but your own brains and hands, trusting in your father's God, shall yet have to sing as your fathers sang, "the God which fed me all my life long."

Young men and young women beginning life, I charge you seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness! It is not life to live without God–you miss the kernel, the cream, the crown of life if you miss the Presence of God! Life is but a bubble blown up of toil and trouble without God! Life ends in blighted hope if you have not hope in God. But with God you are as a sheep with a Shepherd–cared for, guided, guarded, fed, led–and your end shall be peace without end!

III. Thirdly, bear with me while I follow Jacob in his word upon REDEEMING MERCIES. “The Angel which redeemed me from all evil.” There was to Jacob a mysterious Person who was God and yet the Angel or Messenger of God. He puts this Angel side by side with Elohim, for this Angel was God. Yet was He his Redeemer. He saw Him doing the office of the next-of-kin–though God, He was his Kinsman and, as his Kinsman, effected redemption for him! Jacob’s faith enabled him, like Job, to know that his Redeemer lives. He saw that this Covenant Messenger had redeemed him from all evil and he magnified the name of the Lord who revealed Himself in this Angel!

When Jacob was in his sorest straits, this Redeeming Angel always interposed. He fell into an evil state through the influence of his mother and he did Esau serious wrong. He fled for his life and at that time there was a great gulf between him and God. Then that Angel came in and bridged the gulf with a ladder by which he might rise to God. The Kinsman, God, came in and showed Jacob how the abyss might be crossed, so that he might return to his God. When he was away in Padanaram, he began to sink very low while chaffering with churlish Laban. Then, again, the Angel came and said, “Get you out from this land and return unto the land of your kindred.” The Redeeming Angel held back wrathful Laban–and when Esau came to meet him in hot anger, the Angel specially appeared to Jacob. The Angel wrestled, as a Man, with Jacob to get

Jacob out of Jacob and raise him into Israel! How marvelous was the redemption which was worked for him that night at Jabbok! Jacob came forth from the conflict limping, but he walked before the Lord far better than before! That same mysterious Person had bid him go down into Egypt with the promise that He would go down with him. It was the Angel of God's Presence who held His shield over Jacob and preserved him from all evil.

Brothers and Sisters, let us also tell of the redeeming mercies of the Lord Jesus towards us! He redeemed us on the bloody tree, but He has also redeemed us from our death in sin. Do you remember the place and time when Jesus first met with you? Perhaps not. But blessed be the Redeeming Angel that quickened me into spiritual life! I recall the place and time with pleasure! He redeemed us, also, from despair when, under a sense of sin, we could not dare to hope. He came to us and showed us our healing in His wounds and our life in His death. Afterwards, when our corruptions began to rise and we had a hard battle to believe that such sinners were, indeed, saved, the Redeeming Angel confirmed our faith and gave us inward strength. Do we not well remember when He said unto us, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you"? I want you to look back and remember the times when you were sick and this Redeeming Angel so sweetly visited you that you were half afraid to get well, for fear

you should lose His Presence–your bed had become a throne to you!

You remember, too, when that pinch came in business, so that you could not see how to provide things honest in the sight of all men. Then Jesus revealed His love and bade you think of the lilies and the ravens which neither spin nor sow and yet are clothed majestically and fare sumptuously! Many a time has the Lord delivered you because He delighted in you. When you were likely to fall into sin. When you were very wrong in spirit, He beheld you in pity and restored your soul. Though you were so lukewarm that He was ready to spue you out of His mouth, yet He knocked at your door and when you admitted Him, He came in and supped with you–and your soul was soon on fire with love to Him! He restored your soul and the love of your espousals came back to you. Blessed Redeemer, how graciously do You deliver! Oh that we more often thought of the interpositions of the loving Christ! He did not only redeem us when He died, but He still redeems us by His living power! This is the sum of our life–the Angel of the Covenant has delivered us day by day, is delivering us and will deliver us to the end! Do you wonder that we commend Him to our offspring and desire to commit them to His loving care? Young Friends who know not the Savior, I would gladly lead you to this Guardian Angel, this God-like Man who will save you from all evil from this day forth and forevermore!

IV. Now comes the last point–I do not know if anyone has gone to sleep in this close atmosphere, but if so, let him kindly wake up, for I have something to say which will interest him. Jacob has spoken of ancestral mercies, personal mercies and redeeming mercies–and now he deals with FUTURE MERCIES as he cries–"Bless the lads." He began with blessing Joseph and he finishes with blessing his lads. O dear Friends, if God has blessed you, I know you will want Him to bless others! There is the stream of mercy, deep, broad and clear–you have drunk of it and are refreshed, but it is as full as ever! It will flow on, will it not? You do not suppose that you and I have dammed up the stream so as to keep it to ourselves! No, it is too strong–too full a stream for that! It will flow on from age to age. God will bless others as He has blessed us. Unbelief whispers that the true Church will die out. Do not believe it! Christ will live and His Church will live with Him till the heavens are no more. Has He not said, "Because I live, you shall live also?" "Oh," you say, "but we shall not see such holy men in the next generation as in past ages." Why not? I hope the next age will see far better men than any of those who are with us at this time! Pray that it may be so. Instead of the fathers, may there be the children and may these be princes before the Lord!

The stream of Divine Grace will flow on. Oh, that it may take our sons and daughters in its course! "Bless the lads." Sunday school teachers, is not that a good prayer for you? Pray the Lord to bless

the lads and the lasses, because He has blessed you. There is the stream–it must flow somewhere–pray, “Lord, make it flow to my family and to my class.” For Your mercy’s sake, gracious Lord, “bless the lads.”

We need not say in what precise form or way the blessing shall come. Let us leave it in all its breadth of inconceivable benediction. May the Lord bless our youth as only He can do it! And if He causes them to fear and trust Him, He will be blessing all of us and blessing ages to come. Upon these Ephraims and Manassehs will depend the work of the Lord in the years to come. Therefore, with emphasis we pray, “Bless the lads.” All for us, we are content to work on, saying, “Let Your work appear unto Your servants.” But our anxious desire is that our children may reap the result of our labors and, therefore, we add, “and Your glory unto their children.”

In closing, I wish to bear a personal testimony by narrating an incident in my own life. I have been preaching in Essex this week and I took the opportunity to visit the place where my grandfather preached so long–and where I spent my earliest days. Last Wednesday was to me a day in which I walked like a man in a dream! Everybody seemed bound to recall some event or other of my childhood. What a story of Divine Love and Mercy did it bring before my mind! Among other things, I sat down in a place that must always be sacred to me. There stood in my grandfather’s manse garden two arbors made of yew trees, cut into sugar-loaf

fashion. Though the old manse has given way to a new one and the old chapel is also gone, yet the yew trees flourish as before.

I sat down in the right hand arbor and I thought of what had happened there many years ago. When I was a young child staying with my grandfather, there came to preach in the village Mr. Knill who had been a missionary at St. Petersburg and a mighty preacher of the Gospel. He came to preach for the London Missionary Society and arrived on the Saturday at the manse. He was a great soul-winner and he soon spied out the boy. He said to me, “Where do you sleep? for I want to call you up in the morning.” I showed him my little room. At six o'clock he called me up and we went into that arbor. There, in the sweetest way, he told me of the love of Jesus and of the blessedness of trusting in Him and loving Him in our childhood. With many a story he preached Christ to me and told me how good God had been to him.

And then he prayed that I might know the Lord and serve Him. He knelt down in that arbor and prayed for me with his arms about my neck. He did not seem content unless I kept with him in the interval between the services and he heard my childish talk with patient love. On Monday morning he did as on the Sabbath and again on Tuesday. Three times he taught me and prayed with me and before he had to leave, my grandfather had come back from the place where he had gone to preach–and all the family were gathered to morning prayer. Then, in the presence of them all, Mr.

Knill took me on his knee and said, “This child will one day preach the Gospel and he will preach it to great multitudes. I am persuaded that he will preach in the chapel of Rowland Hill, where, (I think he said), I am now the minister.”

He spoke very solemnly, and called upon all present to witness what he said. Then he gave me sixpence as a reward if I would learn the hymn–

“God moves in a mysterious way

His wonders to perform.”

I was made to promise that when I preached in Rowland Hill’s Chapel that hymn should be sung. Think of that as a promise from a child! Would it ever be other than an idle dream? Years flew by. After I had begun, for some little time, to preach in London, Dr. Alexander Fletcher had to give the annual sermon to children in Surrey Chapel, but as he was taken ill, I was asked, in a hurry, to preach to the children. “Yes,” I said, “I will, if the children will sing, ‘God moves in a mysterious way.’ I have made a promise long ago that so that should be sung.”

And so it was–I preached in Rowland Hill’s Chapel and the hymn was sung! My emotions on that occasion I cannot describe. Still that was not the chapel which Mr. Knill intended! All unsought by me, the minister at Wotton-UnderEdge, which was Mr. Hill’s summer residence, invited me to preach there. I went on the condition that the congregation should sing, “God moves in a

mysterious way"–which was also done. After that I went to preach for Mr. Richard Knill, himself, who was then at Chester. What a meeting we had! Mark this! He was preaching in the theater! His preaching in a theater took away from me all fear about preaching in secular buildings and set me free for the campaigns in Exeter Hall and the Surrey Music Hall. How much this had to do with other theater services you know–

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform."

After more than 40 years of the Lord's loving kindness, I sat again in that arbor! No doubt it is a mere trifle for outmembers of his family, including his son and his grandchildren, were in the garden and I could not help calling them together around that arbor while I praised the Lord for His goodness. One irresistible impulse was upon me–it was to pray God to bless those lads that stood around me! Do you not see how the memory begat the prayer? I wanted them to remember, when they grew up, my testimony of God's goodness to me–and for that same reason I tell it to you young people who are around me this morning!

God has blessed me all my life long and redeemed me from all evil–and I pray that He may be your God. You that have godly parents, I would specially address. I beseech you to follow in their footsteps, that you may one day speak of the Lord as they were able to do in their day. Remember that special promise, "I love

them that love Me and those that seek Me early shall find Me." May the Holy Spirit lead you to seek Him this day and you shall live to praise His name as Jacob did! PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON–Genesis 47.HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"–916, 214.

Ge 49:4 • Instability

SERMON 0158

I*nstability*

"Unstable as water, you shall not excel."

Genesis 49:4

PERFECT stability has ceased from the world since the day when Adam fell. He was stable enough when in the Garden he was obedient to his Master's will but when he ate of the forbidden fruit he did not only slide himself but he shook the standing places of all his posterity. Perfect stability belongs alone to God. He alone, of all beings, is without variableness or shadow of a turning. He is immutable, He will not change. He is all-wise, He need not change. He is perfect. He cannot change. But men, the best of them are mutable and therefore to a degree they are unstable and do not

excel. Yet it is remarkable that, although man has lost perfect stability, he has not lost the admiration of it.

Perhaps there is no virtue, or, rather, no compound of virtues which the world more esteems than stability of mind. You will find that although men have often misplaced their praise and have called those great who were not great, those moral who were far below the level of morality, yet they have scarcely ever called a man great who has not been consistent, who has not had strength of mind enough to be stable in his principles. I know not how it is but so it is–whenever a man is firm and consistent–we always admire him for it.

Though we feel certain that he is wrong, yet his consistency in his wrong still excites our admiration. We have known men whom we have thought to be insane–they have conceived a design so ridiculous that we could only laugh at them and despise their idea. But they have stuck to it and we have said, "Well, there is nothing like a man standing to a thing." And we have admired even the senseless, brainless idiot, as we have thought him, when we have seen him stubbornly insisting that his idea would at last triumph and persevering in futile endeavors to realize his wish.

Now, my Brethren, if it is so in earthly things, it is so also in spiritual. Instability in religion is a thing which every man despises. Although every man has, to a degree, evil in himself, stability in the firm profession and practice of godliness will always win

respect–even from the worldly. And certainly it will not be forgotten by Him whose smile is honor and whose praise is glory–even the great Lord and Master–before whom we stand or fall.

I have many characters here today whom I desire to address in the words of my text. “Unstable as water, you shall not excel.” I propose, first, briefly to notice, the common and unavoidable instabilities which necessarily attach themselves to the best of Christians. I shall then note the character of a Christian who is noted for glaring instability but who,notwithstanding, has sufficient godliness to bid us hope that he is a child of God. I shall then have to do with the mereprofessorsinner who in any pretensions he may ever make to better feelings, is always like the early cloud and the morning dew.

First, then, to ALL Christians, permit me to address myself. Our father Adam spoiled us all. And although the second Adam has renewed us, He has not yet removed from us the infirmities which the first Adam left us as a mournful legacy. We are none of us stable as we should be. We had a notion when we were first converted that we should never know a change. Our soul was so full of love that we could not imagine it possible we should ever flag in our devotion. Our faith was so strong in our Incarnate Master that we smiled at older Christians who talked of doubts and fears.

Our faces were so steadfastly set Zionward that we never imagined Bye-path Meadow would ever be trod by our feet. We felt sure that our course would certainly be “like the shining light which shines more and more unto the perfect day.” But, my Brethren, have we found it so? Have we not this day to lament that we have been very changeable and inconstant, even unstable as water? How unstable have we been in our frames? Today we have climbed the top of Pisgah and have viewed the heavenly landscape by the eye of faith.

Tomorrow we have been plunged in the dungeon of despair and could not call a grain of hope our own. Today we have feasted at the banqueting table of communion. Tomorrow we have been exclaiming, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even unto His feet.” At night I have said, “I will not let You go except You bless me.” Tomorrow has beheld my grasp loosened and prayer neglected until God has said, “I will return unto My rest, until you have acknowledged your transgressions which you have committed against Me.” High frames one day, low frames the next.

We have had more changes than even this variable climate of ours. It is a great mercy for us that frames and slings are not always the index of our security–for we are as safe when we are mourning as we are when we are singing. But verily, if our true state before

God had changed as often as our experience of His presence, we must have been cast into the bottomless pit years ago.

And how variable have we been in our faith! In the midst of one trouble we have declared, “though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” We have courted the jeer, we have laughed at the scorn of the world and have stood like rocks in the midst of foaming billows when all men were against us. Another week has seen us flying away, after denying our Master, because like Peter, we were afraid of some little maid, or of our own shadow. After coming out of a great trouble, we have resolutely declared “I can never doubt God again,” but the next cloud that has swept the sky has darkened all our faith. We have been variable in our faith.

And have you not also, at times, my Friends, felt variable in your love? Sweet Master, King of Heaven, fairest of a thousand fairs! My heart is knit to You–my soul melts at the mention of Your name. My heart bubbles up with a good matter when I speak of the things which I have made touching the King–

“The strings that bind around my heart,
Tortures and racks may tear them off.
But they can never, never part,
The hold I have of Christ, my love.”

Surely, I could die for You and think it better than to live, if so I might honor You. This is the sweet manner of our spirit when our love is burning and fervent–but soon we neglect the fire, it

becomes dim and we have to rake among the ashes even for a spark, crying–

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

How unstable we are! At one time we are quite certain we are the Lord's. Though an angel from Heaven should deny our election, or our adoption, we would reply that we have the witness of the Spirit that we are born of God. But perhaps within two minutes we shall not be able to say that we ever had one spiritual feeling. We shall perhaps think that we never repented aright, never fled to Christ aright and did never believe to the saving of the soul. Oh, it is no wonder that we do not excel when we are such unstable creatures! Alas, my Brethren, I might enlarge on the inconsistencies of the mass of Christians. How unfaithful we have been to our dedication vows! How negligent of close communion! How unlike we have been to holy Enoch!

How much more like Peter, when he followed afar off! I might tell how one day, like the mariner, we mounted up to Heaven and how the next moment we have gone to the lowest depths when the waves of God's grace have ceased to lift us up. I wonder at David, at Jacob and at every instance we have in Scripture of excellent men. Marvel, O you angels, that God should ever make such bright

stars out of such black blots as we are! How can it ever be that man, so fickle, so inconstant, should nevertheless be a pillar in the house of his God and should be made to stand "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"?

How is it, O our God, that You could have steered a vessel so safely to its port which was so easily driven by every wind and carried away by every wave? He is a good marksman who can shoot so crooked an arrow straight to its target. Marvel not that we do not excel–marvel that we do excel in anything unstable as we are.

II. And now leaving these general remarks I have to single out a certain class of persons. I believe them to be TRUE CHRISTIANS but they are Christians of a singular sort. I would not be so harsh as to condemn them, though I must certainly condemn the error with which I am about to find fault. I doubt not that they have been converted in a genuine manner but still they are often a mystery to me and I should think they are a mystery to themselves.

How many Christians have we in our Churches that are unstable as water! I suppose they were born so. They are just as unstable in business as they are in religion. They open a grocer's shop and shut it in three months and turn drapers and when they have been drapers long enough to become almost bankrupts, they leave that and try something else. When they were boys they could never play

a game through–they must always be having something fresh and now they are just as childish as when they were children.

Look at them in doctrine–you never know where to find them. You meet them one day and they are very full of some super-lapsarian doctrine. They have been to some strong Calvinist place and nothing will suit them except the very highest doctrine and that must be spiced with a little of the gall of bitterness or they cannot think it is the genuine thing. Very likely next week they will be Arminians. They will give up all idea of a fixed fate and talk of free will and man's responsibility like the most earnest Primitive Methodist. Then they steer another way. "Nothing is right but the Church of England. Is it not established by Law? Ought not every Christian to go to his parish Church?"

Ah, let them alone, they will be at the most gross schismatic shop in the metropolis before long. Or if they do not change their denomination they are always changing their minister. A new minister starts up. There is no one, since the Apostles, like he. They take a seat and join the Church. He is everything to them. In three months they have done with him, another minister rises up some distance off and these people are not particular how far they walk–so they go hear him. He is the great man of the age. He will see every man's candle out and his will burn on. But a little trouble comes on the Church and they leave him. They have no attachment

to anything. They are merely feathers in the wind or corks onthe wave.

They hear a sermon preached and they say, “I think it did me good” but they do not venture to be sure till they speak to some great man who is a member of the Church and he says “Oh! there was nothing in it.” “Ah! just so,” they say and cannot make up their minds whether it was a good sermon or not. They are unstable. They could easily be talked into anything or out of anything. They never had any brains in their head, I suppose. Or if they ever had any they gave them to somebody else to muddle as he liked. They believe the last man they hear and are easily guided and led by him.

Now, if the matter ended there it would not be so bad. But these poor people are just the same with regard to any religious enterprise they take in hand. There is a Sunday-School–they are enchanted with the thought. What a lovely thing it must be to sit on a form and try to teach half-a-dozen boys the way to Heaven. They go to the Sunday-School and are alarmed the very first day when they hear all the boys talking louder than the teachers. After about ten minutes they think it is not quite so nice as they thought. Perhaps they think it is that particular school they do not like and they try another. But at last they give up all Sunday-School teaching and make up their minds that it is not a good thing, at least not for them.

Then there is a Ragged-School. What a Divine enterprise! They will be Ragged-School teachers and off they go with their hearts full of fire and their eyes full of tears over these poor children they are going to teach. Ah, how soon is their zeal withered and all their glory departed! Hear them talk about Ragged-Schools a month afterwards–they shake their heads and say it is a very arduous enterprise. They do not think they had a call to it–they will try something else and so they keep on to the end of the chapter–they are "everything by turns and nothing long." There are some Brethren in the ministry very much of the same sort. They never preach in one pulpit long, (though some say they preach there too long, for they ought never to have preached there at all).

But I sometimes think that if they had had a little more courage and bore a little more of the brunt of the battle, they might have done good to some of the villages where they were placed. But they are unstable as water and everybody sees that they cannot excel. The same instability men will carry out in their friendships. They meet a person one day and are as friendly as possible with him. They meet him the next day–he does not know what he has done to offend them but they turn their head another way. And some carry their instability a little farther, they carry it into their moral character.

I shall not deny their Christianity but they are a strange sort of Christians. For these people will sometimes, at least, stretch the

cords of godliness a little too far and though they certainly do act in the main conscientiously, yet their conscience is a large one and it admits a great many things which tender-hearted people would think were wrong. We cannot find out any crime for which we could excommunicate them, yet in our hearts we often say, “Dear me, what a sad disgrace So-and-So is to the cause. We could do far better without him than with him, for he casts such a slur on the name of Christ.”

Now, do not think I am drawing a fancy picture. I beg to inform you I am not. There are persons here who are furnishing me with the model. And if they choose to think me personal I shall be obliged to them, for I intend to be. These persons are to be found in all Churches and among all denominations. You have met them everywhere. They are as unstable as water. They do not excel.

Now, let me address these persons very earnestly. My Brothers and Sisters, I would be far from dealing in a censorious manner with you for I am inclined to think that your instability is a little owing to some latent insanity. We are no doubt all of us insane to a degree. There is some little thing in us which if we saw in another we should regard as being a little madness. I would therefore, my Brethren, deal very leniently with you but at the same time let me very solemnly address you as a Christian minister speaking to a professedly Christian man.

My Brethren, how much moral weight you lose in the Church and in the world by your perpetual instability. No one ever attaches any importance to your opinion because your opinion has no importance in it–seeing that you yourself will contradict it in a very short time. You see many persons growing up in the Church who have an influence over their neighbor for good. You sometimes wish that you, too, could strengthen the young convert, or reclaim and guide the wanderer. My Brethren you cannot do it, because of your inconsistency. Now is it not a fearful thing that you should be throwing away the whole force and weight of your character, simply because of this insane habit of yours of being always unstable?

I beseech you, my Brothers and Sisters, recollect that you are responsible to God for your influence. And if you can have influence and do not get it you are as sinful as if, having influence, you had misused it. Do not, I beseech you, suffer this instability to continue, lest you should become like the chaff which the wind drives away–of no account to the world at all. Remember, my Brethren, how your instability ruins your usefulness. You never continue long enough in an enterprise to do good. What would you think of the farmer who should farm just long enough to plow his ground and sow his wheat but not long enough to get a harvest?

You would think him foolish. But just so foolish are you. You begin time enough to be overworked before you have well

commenced. My Brothers and Sisters, review your history. What have you done? You have made hundreds of futile attempts to do something but a list of failures must be the only record of your labors. What do you think will be your distress of mind when you come to die, when you look back upon your life and see it all the way through a host of blunders? Do you not think it will stuff the pillow of your dying bed with thorns to think that you were so wayward in disposition, so unstable in heart that you were unable to accomplish anything for your Master?

When you lay your crown at His feet you will have to say, "There is my crown, my Master but it has not a solitary star in it for I never worked long enough for You in any enterprise to win a soul. I only did enough to fail and to be laughed at by all." And I would have you think also, my Brothers and Sisters, how can you be a growing Christian and yet be so changeable as you are? If a gardener should plant a tree today and take it up in the course of a month and transfer it to another place, what crop would he have when autumn came? He would not have much to repay his toil. The continual changing of the tree would put it into such a weakly condition that if it did not actually die, it would certainly produce nothing.

And how can you expect to grow in knowledge when you have no steadfast principle? The man who espouses one form of doctrine and does it honestly, will, though it is a mistaken form, at least understand it. But you do not know enough of Calvinism to defend

it from its opponents, or enough of Arminianism to defend it from the Calvinists. You are not wise in anything. You are a rolling stone, you gather no moss. You stay in one school only long enough to read through the curriculum but you learn nothing. I see you are smiling. And yet some of those who smiled are just the men we smile at. They are here. But alas–I have noticed one sad thing respecting these people–they are generally the most conceited in all the world.

They think they are excellent men. They are at home everywhere. If they are in error they know they can get right tomorrow. And then if someone else will again convince them they are in error, they know no difference between error and truth, except the difference which other people like to point out to them. O you unstable Christians, hear the word of the Lord! "Unstable as water you shall not excel." Your life shall have little of the cream of happiness upon it–you shall not walk in the midst of the king's highway, in which no lion shall be found. You shall walk on the edge of the way, where you shall encounter every danger, feel every hardship and endure every ill.

You shall have enough of God's comfort to keep you alive but not enough to give you joy in your spirit and consolation in your heart. Oh, I beseech you, ponder a little. Study the Word more–know what is right and defend what is right. Study the Law more–know what is right and do what is right. Study God's will more–know

what He would have you do and then do it. For an unstable Christian never can excel.

III. But now there is another class of persons whom we dare not, in the spirit of the widest charity, admit to be true Christians. They are PROFESSORS. They have been baptized. They receive the Lord's Supper. They attend Prayer Meetings, Church meetings and everything else that belongs to the order of Christians with which they are connected. They are never behindhand in religious performances. They are the most devout hypocrites. They are the most pious formalists that could be discovered the wide world over. Their religion on the Sabbath-Day is of the most superfine order.

Their godliness, when they are in their pews, cannot be exceeded. They sing with the most eloquent praise. They pray the longest and most hypocritical prayer that man could utter. They are just up to the mark in every religious point of view except on the point which looks to the heart. As far as the externals of godliness go there is nothing to be desired.They tithe the anise, the mint and the cummin. They fast twice in the week. Or if they do not fast, they are quite as religious in not fasting and are just as godly in not doing it, as if they did it.

But these people are unstable as water in the worst sense. For while they sing Watt's hymns on Sunday, they sing other songs on Monday. And while they drink sacramental cups on Sabbath evenings, there are other cups of which they drink too deep on

other nights. And though they pray most marvelously, there is a pun on that word pray and they knowhow to exercise it upon their customers in business. They have a great affection for everything that is pious and devout. But alas, like Balaam, they take the reward of wickedness and they perish in the gainsaying of Core.

"These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear. Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds–trees whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots. Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame. Wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever."

They bring a disgrace upon the cause which they profess–not the vilest profane swearer brings more dishonor on God's holy name than they do. They can find fault with everything in the Church while they commit all manner of wickedness and are, as the Apostle said, even weeping "enemies of the Cross of Christ, for their God is their belly and they glory in their shame." O hypocrite! You think that you shall excel because the minister has been duped and gives you credit for a deep experience. Because the deacons have been entrapped and think you to be eminently godly. Because the Church members receive you to their houses and think you a dear child of God, too! Poor Soul!

You may go to your grave with the delusion in your brain that all is right with you. But remember, though like a sheep you are laid in

your grave, Death will find you out. He will say to you, Off with your mask, Man! Away with all your robes! Up with that whitewashed sepulcher! Take off that green turf. Let the worms be seen. Out with the body. Let us see the reeking corruption! And what will you say when your abominably corrupt and filthy heart shall be opened before the sun and men and angels hear your lies and hypocrisies laid bare before them? Will you play the hypocrite then? Soul, come and sing God's praises in the Day of Judgment with false lips! Tell Him now, while a widow's house is in your throat, tell Him that you love Him!

Come, now, you that devour the fatherless, you that rob, you that do uncleanness! Tell Him now that you did make your boast in the Lord! Tell Him that you did preach His Word, tell Him that you did walk in His streets! Tell Him you did make it known that you were one of the excellent of the earth! What? Man, is your babbling tongue silent for once? What is the matter with you? You were never slow to talk of your godliness. Speak out and say, "I took the sacramental cup. I was a professor." Oh how changed! The whitewashed sepulcher has become white in another sense–he is white with horror.

Look! The talkative has become dumb. The boaster is silent. The formalist's garb is rent to rags, the moth has devoured their beauty. Their gold has become tarnished and their silver cankered. Ah, it must be so with every man who has thus belied God and his own

conscience. The stripping Day of Judgment will reveal him to God and to himself. And how awful shall be the damnation of the hypocrite! If I knew that I must be damned, one of my prayers should be, “Lord, let me not be damned with hypocrites.” For surely to be damned with them is to be damned twice over. Conceive of a hypocrite going into Hell. You know how one of the Prophets depicted the advent of a great monarch into Hell, when all the kings that had been his slaves rose up and said, “Are you become like one of us?”

Do you not think you see the godly Christian deacon, so godly that he was a liar all his life? Do you not think you see the eminent Christian member that kept a bank, took the chair at public meetings, swindled all he could and died in despair? Do you not think you see him coming into the pit? There is one man there that was a drunkard all his life. Hear his speech, “ Ah, you were a sober man! You used to talk to me and tell me that drunkards could not inherit the kingdom ofHeaven. Aha, and are you become like one of usAbout a month ago, when we were on earth, you met me and rebuked me for profane swearing and told me that all swearers should have their portion in the lake. Ah, there is not much to choose between you and me now, is there?”

And the profane man laughs as well as he can laugh in misery at his desperately religious adviser. “ Oh,” says another–and they look round at one another with demoniac mirth. As much mockery of

joy as Hell can afford–“ Theparson here? Now preach us a sermon. Now pray us a long prayer! Plenty of time to do it inthere is no widow’s house to eat here and he only prayed on the strength of the widow’s house.”

This is a hard scene for me to describe. But I doubt not of its truthfulness. It may be given to you in rough language but it needs far rougher to make you know the dread reality. And what a solemn thought it is! There is not one man nor one woman in this place who has not need to ask, “Is it so with me?” Many have been deceived–I may be–you may be, my Hearer. “I am not deceived,” says one, “I am a minister.” My Brethren, there are many of us who are preachers who are like Noah’s carpenters. We may help to build an ark and never get in it ourselves.

Says another, “I shall not endure such language as that. I am a deacon.” You may be all that and yet, after having ministered, instead of earning to yourself a good degree, you may be cast from the presence of God. “No,” says another, “but I have been a Christian professor these last forty years and nobody has found fault with me.” Ah, I have known many a rotten bough to have stopped on a tree forty years and you may be rotten and yet stand all that time. But the winds of judgment will crack you at last and down you will fall. “No,” says another. “I know I am not insincere. I am sure I am right.” I am glad that you think so but I would not

like you to say it. “Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”

There have been many great bubbles that have burst before this and your piety may be one of them. “Let not him that puts on the harness boast as though he put it off.” It will be time enough for you to be quite sure when you are quite safe. Yet blessed be God, we hope we can say, “O Lord, if not awfully deceived, we have given our hearts to You! Lord You know all things. You know that we love You and if we do not, Lord You know we pray this prayer from our hearts–‘Search me, O God and try my ways, prove me and know my heart and see if there are any evil ways in me and lead me in the way everlasting.’” May God the Holy Spirit strengthen and settle each of us.

IV. And now I have the last word to address to those who MAKE NO PRETENSION TO RELIGION whatever. I have heard hundreds of persons in my short life excuse their sin by saying, “Well, I make no profession,” and I have always thought it one of the strangest excuses–one of the most wild vagaries of apology to which the human mind could ever resort.

Take an illustration, which I have used before. Tomorrow morning, when the Lord Mayor is sitting, there are two men brought up before him for robbery. One of them says he is not guilty. He declares that he is a good character and he is an honest man in general though he was guilty in this case. He is punished.

The other one says, “Well, your worship, I make no profession. I’m a down right thorough thief and I don’t make any profession of being honest at all.”

Why you can suppose how much more severe the sentence would be upon such a man. Now, when you say I do not make any profession of being religious, what does that mean? It means that you are a despiser of God and of God’s Law. It means that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. You that boast of making no profession of religion–you are boasting you know not what of. You would think it a strange thing for a man to boast that he made no profession of being a gentleman, or no profession of being honest, or no profession of being sober, or no profession of being chaste.

You would shun a man at once who did this. And you who make no pretensions to religion just make your trial the more easy–for there will be no need for any dispute concerning you. When the scales of justice are lifted up at last you will be found to be light weight and that upon your own confession. I cannot imagine you urging such a plea as that when God shall judge you. “My Lord, I made no profession.” “What?” says the King, “Did My subject make no profession of obedience?” “O Lord, I made no profession.” “What?” says the Creator, “Make no profession of acknowledging My rights?” “I made no profession of religion.”

“What?” says the Judge, “Did I send My Son into the world to die and did this man make no profession of casting his soul upon Him? What? Did he make no profession of his need of mercy? Then he shall have none. Does he dare tell Me to My face that he never made any profession of faith in Christ and never had anything to do with the Savior? Then insomuch as he despised My Son and despised His Cross and rejected His salvation, let him die the death.” And what that death is with its everlasting wailings and gnashing of teeth, eternity alone can tell.

O Sinner! You have some part and lot in my text. You are “unstable as water.” Let me remind you that though you make no profession of religion now, there was a time when you did. Strong man! You are laughing now–I repeat it–there was a time when you did talk about religion. It is not quite gone from your memory yet. You lay sick with fever for six weeks–do you recollect when the delirium came on and they all thought that you must die? Do you recollect when your poor brain was right for a moment how you asked the physician whether there was any hope for you and he would not exactly say “No,” but he looked so blank at you, that you understood what it meant?

Do you recollect the agony with which you looked forward to death? Do you recollect how you groaned in your spirit and said, “O God, have mercy upon me”? Do you recollect that you got a little better and you told your friends that if you lived you would

serve God? “Oh! it is all over now,” you say you were a fool! Yes, you were a fool, that is true–you were a fool to have said what you did not mean and to have lied before God. You do not profess religion! But you remember the last time the terrific thunder and lightning came. You were out in the storm. A flash came very near you. You are a bold man but not so bold as you pretend to be.

You shook from head to foot and when the thunder clap succeeded, you were almost down on your knees and before you knew it you were in prayer. “Please, God, get me home tonight,” you said, “I shall not take Your name in vain again!” But you have done it. You are unstable as water. You went sometime ago to a Church or a Chapel–I care not which–the minister told you plainly where you were going. You stood there and trembled. Tears ran down your cheeks. You did not beat your wife that Sunday. You were a great deal more sober that week and when your companion said you looked squeamish, you denied it and said you had no such thoughts as they imagined. “Unstable as water.”

Oh, there are some of you worse than that still–for not once, nor twice but scores of times you have been driven under a faithful minister to the very verge of what you thought repentance and then, just when something said in your heart, “This is a turning point,” you have started back. You have chosen the wages of unrighteousness and have again wandered into the world. Soul! My heart yearns for you! “Unstable as water you shall not excel.” No,

but I pray the Lord to work in you something that will be stable. For we all believe–and what I say is not a matter of fiction but a thing that you believe in your own hearts to be true–we all believe that we must stand before the judgment bar of God and before long give account of the things done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be evil.

Friend, what account will you give of your broken vows, of your perjured soul? What will you have to say why judgment should not be pronounced against you? Ah, Sinner, you will want Christ then! What would you give then for one drop of His blood? "Oh, for the hem of His garment! Oh, that I might but look to Him and be lightened. Oh, would to God that I might hear the Gospel once again!" I hear you wailing when God has said, "Depart you cursed!" And this is the burden of your song, "Fool that I was, to have despised Jesus, who was my only hope, to have broken my promise and gone back to the poor vain world that deluded me, after all!"

And now I hear Him say "I called but you refused. I stretched out My hand but no man regarded. Now I will laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear comes." I always think those two last sentences the most awful in the Bible. "I will laugh at your calamity." The laugh of the Almighty over men that have rebelled against Him, that have despised Him and trod His Gospel

underfoot! “I also will laugh at your calamity I will mock when your fear comes.” Rail at that if you like, it is sure, Sirs.

Remember that all your kicking at God’s laughter will not make Him leave it off–remember that all your rebellious speeches against Him shall be avenged in that day–unless you repent. But if you despise Him your blasphemy cannot quench the flames of Hell. Nor will your jeers slay the sword of vengeance–fall it must and it will fall on you all the more heavily because you did despise it.

Hear the Gospel and then farewell. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, was born of the Virgin Mary and became a man. He lived on earth a life of holiness and suffering. At last He was nailed to the Cross and in deep woe He died. He was buried. He rose again from the deed, He ascended into Heaven. And now God “commands all men everywhere to repent.” And He tells them this–“Whosoever believes on the Son of God shall not perish but have eternal life.” And this is His Gospel. If you this day feel yourself to be a sinner, if that is a feeling worked in you by the Holy Spirit and not a casual thought flashing across the soul–then Christ was punished for your sins.

And you cannot be punished. For God will not punish twice for one offense. Believe in Christ–cast your soul on the atonement that He made. And although black as Hell in sin, you may this day find yourself, through the efficacious blood of Christ, whiter than snow. The Lord help you, poor Soul, to believe that the Man who died on

Calvary was God and that He took the sin of all Believers upon Himself–that you, being a sinner and a Believer–He has taken your sins and that therefore you are free. Thus believe and by faith you will have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom also we have received the atonement. Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMONTO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Ge 49:8 • Praise for Jesus

SERMON 3296

P*raise For Jesus*

"Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise."

Genesis 49:8

THESE words were spoken by the Patriarch Jacob when he blessed his sons as he lay a-dying. But before he finished Judah's blessing, the good old man seemed to forget his son and to turn his thoughts to Jesus, our Lord, of whom Judah was a very significant type. Jacob compared Judah to a lion and a lion's whelp–and in the Revelation we read that one of the elders said to John, "The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book, and to loosen the seven seals thereof." In the 10 th verse of this Chapter we have Jacob's notable prophecy concerning the

comingof Christ, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.”

I intend only to speak about Judah so far as he is a type of Christ, and I trust that I shall, by the Holy Spirit’s gracious guidance, move all the brethren of the Lord Jesus Christ to praise Him, so that I shall be able to reverently say to Him, “Jesus, You are He whom Your brothers shall praise.” So I shall speak, first, concerning the praise of Judah andthe praise of Jesus.

First, then, let us think about THE PRAISE OF JUDAH AND THE PRAISE OF JESUS.

Jacob said to Judah, “You are he who your brothers shall praise.” Judah was preeminent above his brethren in several things for which he deserved to be praised. The first was the eloquence and prevalence of his intercession. Judahseems to have been the gifted one out of the 12 sons of Jacob, and his pleading prevailed with his father when all others were powerless. When “the lord of the land” of Egypt, whom his brothers failed to recognize although he knew them, said to them, “You shall not see my face, except your brother be with you,” they went back home with heavy hearts and their father stoutly refused to allow Benjamin to go down into Egypt. But when all their corn was eaten up, and they were obliged to go again to buy more, it was Judah who persuaded Jacob to let Benjamin go with them. Reuben and Levi were obliged to be silent

in that critical period, for they had lost their rightful position in the family by their transgressions, and Simeon was a hostage in the hands of Joseph–but Judah was able to step into the breach and his intercession prevailed.

We, Brothers and Sisters, are by nature like those sinful sons of Jacob. We have offended our Father who is in Heaven, and it is in vain for us to attempt to approach Him as sinners without an intercessor. But our Judah-Jesus, if I may so call Him, stands before His Father's face–and whatever our desire or our request may be, provided it is a right one–it is sure to be granted when Jesus pleads for us before the Throne of God! "If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous." Turn your eyes upward, Beloved, and see our Great High Priest appearing there in the Presence of God for us! And as He points to the print of the nails in His hands and feet, and to the scar of the soldier's spear in His side, and pleads our cause, be certain that His plea must prevail with His Father! Remember the argument of the Apostle when writing concerning the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ, "this Man, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them." If Judah was praised because his intercession prevailed with Jacob, much more shall Jesus be praised because His intercession prevails with Jehovah! Clap your

hands, O you saints, at the remembrance of His prevalence on your behalf when you sought Him out of the depths of your despair! And praise Him that He still lives to carry on His people's cause above! Have you any burden on your mind at this moment? Is there anything that distresses you? Have you been much in prayer without getting answers to your supplications? Then put your case into the hands of Christ–He has never lost a suit yet–and that is more than the best of earthly advocates can say about the cases entrusted to them! Therefore praise Him, you who have committed yourselves into His hands! And as for you who are going to do so now, begin to praise Him, for your most sanguine anticipations of blessing shall not be disappointed!

That was a wonderful scene when Joseph said that Benjamin should not go back with his brothers, but should remain in Egypt as his servant because the silver cup had been found in his sack, and Judah pleaded with Joseph, not knowing that "the lord of the land" was his own brother! You remember how he pictured their old father at home, who would certainly die of a broken heart if Benjamin did not return to him in safety and how, at last, he offered to be a bondman to Joseph if he would but let Benjamin go free. You see, he pleaded for substitution, and he also told Joseph how he becamesurety for the lad unto his father–and his plea was so effectual that Joseph could refrain himself no longer, but bursting into tears declared that he was their long-lost brother! So, dear

Friends, if the great Lord of Heaven and earth seems angry with you because of your sins–"and He is angry with the wicked every day"–put your case into the hands of the sinners' Advocate, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and when He stands up to plead with His Father for you, He will soon bring a smile of forgiveness upon the righteously severe Countenance of His Father and you shall gladly say, "Jesus, You are He whom Your brethren shall praise because of Your almighty power in pleading for them."

We find that at a later period, the tribe of Judah was foremost in wisdom and skill. If you turn to Exodus 35:30, youwill see that when the tabernacle was to be erected in the wilderness, "Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, the Lord has called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; and to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work." And, surely, I may metaphorically apply this description to our Judah-Jesus! What wisdom there is in Him and what skill! What is there that He cannot do? Bezaleel could cut, polish, and set precious stones–but Jesus can take the worthless pebbles of the brook and transmute them into diamonds! Jesus takes "base things of the world, and things which are despised," and works such marvelous

changes in them that the Lord of Hosts says concerning them, “They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels.” He is a wonderful Lapidary! Some of us have been upon the wheel under His hand for a long time–and we are apt to think that He has cut us most cruelly–but the cutting is intended to bring out our brilliance and to make us fit to shine in the diadem of the King in due time! Bezaleel was also a worker in wood–and our great Judah-Jesus came to us when we were growing wild in the forest of sin. It was His axe of conviction that cut us down and it has been His hand of skill that has been fashioning and carving us to make us worthy to be pillars in His Temple!

What is there that Jesus cannot do? Has He not worked out for us a work which required far more skill than the erecting of the Tabernacle in the wilderness and the making of the Ark of the Covenant, the veil which hung before the Most Holy Place, the high priest’s garments of glory and beauty and all the cunning work devised by Bezaleel and his helpers? Did He not spend His whole life in working out for us a matchless robe of righteousness in which we may even dare to stand before the all-seeing eyes of God? Angels will keep on wondering throughout eternity at the wisdom of their Lord and ours! The wisdom of His teaching is Divine. “Never man spoke like this Man.” The wisdom with which He deals with each individual case that is brought to Him is matchless! He is the Great Physician and there is no earthly doctor

who has such skill as He has. Let Bezaleel, of the tribe of Judah, have all due praise, but let Jesus, the Son of God, have far more! All wisdom is to be found in Him! His very name is "Wisdom." Solomon calls Him by that name. The wisest of men was not at all wise in comparison with Incarnate Wisdom, the Wisdom of God as manifested in Jesus Christ. Jesus, we bless You, You who have worked out a perfect righteousness for us, You who make us into living stones and then build us, stone by stone, into the marvelous edifice of Your Church! Jesus, You are He whom Your brethren shall praise for Your wondrous wisdom and skill!

Further, the tribe of Judah had precedence in presenting offerings unto the Lord. In Numbers 7:12, we read, "Hethat offered his offering the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah." The Lord had said to Moses, "They shall offer their offering, each prince on his day, for the dedicating of the altar," and the prince of the tribe of Judah, therefore, led the way by bringing his offering on the first day. We know that our Lord sprang out of Judah, so he was first with his offering. "No," says someone, "Abel was first with his offering." Yes, apparently He was in the order of time, but Christ's offering was much more ancient than his, for He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." In the Divine Purpose, His sacrifice was offered long before the great tragedy on Calvary! And the merit of His Atonement was reckoned to His people's account long before man was created–but certainly

in order of precedence Christ's offering comes first. Christ brought for His offering His own most precious body and blood and we, by faith, present the same offering when we come to God in the name of Jesus. What sacrifice could we bring if Judah's Prince had not first brought His one offering by which He has perfected forever them that are sanctified? Did I say just now that Christ's offering had precedence? I must correct myself, for it is first, it is last, it is midst, it is the only Sacrifice that canput away sin and make us acceptable unto God! And there is no sacrifice either of prayer or of praise that we can present to God unless we being it by virtue of Christ's one great Sacrifice. Let us, therefore, praise our Judah-Jesus! Let us give Him our loudest hallelujahs, for He comes first to the altar, and we afterwards approach it through Him. Jesus, You are He whom Your brethren shall praise for Your wondrous atoning Sacrifice!

Yet again, Judah had the singular precedence of always leading the van when the tribes were on the march. In Numbers 10:14 we read that, when the fiery-cloudy pillar moved, "in the first place went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah according to their armies." First in the encampment, first on the march, first everywhere was Judah's lion! The tribe of Dan brought up the rear, but the tribe of Judah always went in front. And here again let Jesus Christ be praised, for He always leads the way! If I descend into the Valley of Humiliation, I shall see His footprints all down the

slippery steeps. If I pass through the Enchanted Ground where so many fall asleep, I shall see the track of the Wakeful One all along that dangerous way. If up the Hill Difficulty I have to scramble on my hands and knees, I shall see the marks of the blood drops where His hands were torn by the thorns and His feet were cut by the flints as He, too, climbed there! And when I go down to the river, I shall still see His footprints–and up the other side I shall see the track of my risen Lord! All up the eternal hills I shall but follow where He leads the way! Yes, and up to the very Throne of God He has gone before us, clearing a way for His people and leading them along it.

Yet once more, Judah afterwards attained to the sovereignty, for David, of the tribe of Judah, was in due time proclaimed king over all Israel. We also have a King of the line of Judah, one who is mightier than David, and wiser than Solomon–and happy are we in having such a King to reign over us! Who among us that loves Christ would not set Him up upon a high throne? Oh, that we could continually exalt Him yet more and more! Let your sweetest songs be all in His praise! Let your most daring deeds be done for Him. Give Him, you gracious women, your alabaster boxes full of precious ointment! Prepare your feasts, you wealthy men, and invite Him to preside at the table! Come, you children, and strew branches in the way while He rides along triumphantly! Let, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!" be the joyful strain which comes

from every lip and heart because Jesus reigns over us, the King of kings and Lord of lords! Do praise Him, do extol Him this very moment, lift up your hearts and your voices while we sing this familiar strain–

"Jesus is worthy to receive
Honor and power Divine.
And blessings more than we can give
Be, Lord, forever Thine."

(The congregation joined in singing, and then the preacher continued his sermon).

II. The second part of our subject was to be THE GLORIES OF JUDAH AS SETTING FORTH THE GLORIES OF JESUS. They are illustrated in the sentence concerning Judah that follow our text.

The first of them mentions the victories of Judah–"Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies." You knowwhat it means when a man seizes his enemy by the throat, or when a lion gets its prey by the neck and shakes the very life out of it. Thus has Jesus Christ done with all the enemies of His people. Shall I tell you again the grand old story? 'Twas one dark night when the Great Shepherd was watching His flock that He heard the roaring which told Him that the old lion of the pit was about to leap into the fold to tear the sheep in pieces. Then the Shepherd whispered to Himself, "This is the dreadful hour and the power of darkness." Taking His place in the midst of His blood-bought flock, He waited

for the next terrific roar. And as the lion sprang into the fold, He received him upon His bare bosom, and began at once to grapple with Him. He was wounded in His hands, in His feet, and in His side–and in the desperate struggle "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." It was a dreadful fight which had been foreseen before the world was made, and which shall be the theme of grateful song when the world has ceased to be! But in the end the Shepherd tore the lion as though it had been a kid and, crying, "It is finished," He Himself fell prostrate over His foe, slain, but dying only to rise again and live in everlasting triumph! In that dread combat, His hand was, indeed, on the neck of His enemy–and now He has gone to Glory, leading captivity captive! You who have been delivered by Him from the old lion of the pit may well exclaim, "Jesus, You are He whom Your brethren shall praise."

The next thing for which Judah was to be praised was Jacob's prophecy, " Your father's children shall bow down before you." Now, who in this house is a child of God? You will not be long in answering that question when I put to you another, "Do you bow down before the Lord Jesus Christ?" Here we are, a vast multitude assembled in this Tabernacle, but we are not all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. We cannot all truly say, "Our Father, who are in Heaven." Our text gives us the means of knowing who are the children of God, for the great Father says to His Son, "Your

Father's children shall bow down before You." Do you bow down before the Lord Jesus Christ? Is He your only trust? Do you rest your whole weight upon Him? Do you depend for time and eternity upon Judah-Jesus whom God has anointed and appointed to be the only Savior of sinners? If so, you have proved your sonship by bowing down before your great elder Brother!

The third Glory of Judah was

his lion-like power. Jacob said, "Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, you

are gone up. He stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?" This seems to be a picture, first of Judah, and then of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a young lion, He has gone up and tore His prey in pieces. Sin, death and Hell He has torn asunder! And now that He is like a mighty, full-grown lion, woe be unto those who provoke Him to anger–but blessed are they who have Him on their side! Many of you have seen that beautiful engraving of Una, the type of innocence, riding upon a lion's back. That lion, according to Spenser, protecting her from all ill. That is how every penitent soul rides, by the Grace of God! The Lion of the tribe of Judah is the Guardian of every believing heart. You have but to trust yourself to Jesus and He will see to it that you are never destroyed. He will preserve and deliver you from all evil of every kind and, at last, shall safely bring you where you shall see His face and rejoice in Him forever and ever! But woe to any of

you who reject Him! Woe to you who deny His Deity! Woe to you who break His Sabbaths, abhor His Word and despise His Cross! In that last tremendous Day, His anger against the wicked shall be so terrible that they shall say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Oh, bow before Him, accept His Grace, trust in His atoning Sacrifice and then the very power which should make you now tremble will be exerted on your behalf and cause you to rejoice forever!

Further, Jesus is to be extolled for His perpetual Sovereignty. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between His feet until Shiloh comes." Judah's sovereignty came to an end, but Jesus always reigns. His kingdom here on earth has often seemed as if it were in jeopardy, but it has never been overthrown and it never will be. In the martyr days, they sewed the Christians up in the skins of wild beasts and cast them to the dogs. They dragged them at the heels of horses. They burned them at the stake. They stripped off their clothes and tortured then with hot irons on every part of their body. I dare not mention all the cruelties that were practiced on the followers of Jesus, but nothing availed to shake their allegiance to their King! In all these trials they were more than conquerors through Him who loved them and who gave them the Grace to endure all these things for His sake! Neither

tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword could separate them from the love of Christ! And thus His Kingdom was perpetuated during even the darkest ages of its history–which in another sense were also the brightest because of the Glory that the faithfulness of His followers brought to their King! His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom–"of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His Kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever."

Now we get clear of Judah and come to Shiloh, of whom Jacob says, " unto Him shall the gathering of the peoplebe." Ah, Beloved, there are no gatherings of the people anywhere else like those who come to Christ! It is no small thing that, all these years, the multitudes have gathered in this house, Sabbath by Sabbath, and why do they come? I confidently affirm that the only reason why such crowds gather here is because the preacher's theme is Christ! Feebly as he sometime preaches, his unvarying theme is the Cross, the precious blood, the all-sufficient Sacrifice of Christ offered once for all on Calvary! This is a theme which never palls upon the ear! This is a subject which never grows stale. "We preach Christ Crucified," for this is the magnet that draws the people to Him. Jesus Himself said, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die."

The crowds that come here are nothing in comparison with the multitudes that have been and are still being drawn to Christ by the magnet of His death! I see His Cross standing on yonder hill and I see the people gathering to it from every quarter. There was a little stream at first, but it grew, and none of us can tell how many have already been drawn to Christ–and still they come! While I have been speaking to you, they have kept on coming to Him, and so they shall until "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth." "Yes all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him." "To Him shall the gathering of the people be." They may seem to us to be long in coming, but they must come. The vision may tarry, but it is sure–and at the appointed time there shall be heard a great shout from the dwellers in the land, and from those far off upon the sea and from the glorified in Heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ: and He shall reign forever and ever."

At the last, good old Jacob seems to have had his eyes opened, and to have seen a very singular vision of Judah'sKing–"Binding His foal unto the vine, and His ass's colt unto the choice vine." Yes, 'tis He, the very same of whom the Prophet wrote, "Behold, your King comes unto you, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass." This is Judah-Jesus! He is a King, but He goes not down to Egypt for horses. He is meek and lowly, so He is content

to ride upon the humble ass in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem! The mention of “the vine” and “the choice vine” naturally turns our thoughts to His most instructive parable of the Vine and the branches. And as the ass’s colt was bound to the vine, so is the Church of God bound to Him who said, “I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman.”

Jacob’s next words are also very suggestive–“He washed His garments in wine, and His clothes in the blood of grapes.” You know the meaning of the allegory. Jesus went to Gethsemane and there “the blood of grapes” upon the true Vine–I mean, the bloody sweat that exuded from every pore of His sacred body–was so copious as to make His garments appear as though they had been washed in wine! They took Him to Gabbatha and there they scourged Him so cruelly that again His clothes looked as if they had been washed in the blood of grapes. And so He passed on through the streets of Jerusalem until He came to Golgotha. Can you bear to see Him taking His last bloodbath on Calvary?–

“His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er His body on the tree.”

After that terrible bloodbath, how does He look? What aspect does He bear? Jacob said, “His eyes shall be red with wine, and His teeth white with milk.” His eyes were red with wine, but again it was the red wine of His own most precious blood flowing down from His thorn-crowned brow! And the white teeth seem to suggest

the spotless purity of the Son of God even when He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Oh, we must praise our blessed Judah-Jesus, for He was still fairest of the fair even when His face was marred more than the face of any man! Let us humbly bow before Him. Let us gratefully adore Him as we remember that, "being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." But that was not the end of Him, for He was buried–but the third day He rose again and, after tarrying a while with His disciples, He ascended to His Father and our Father, to His God and ours! And He is coming back again, one of these days, "to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" in Him!

Long ago, Isaiah asked, "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength?" And the answer came at once, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Then the Prophet asked, "Why are You red in Your apparel, and Your garments like he that treads in the wine vat?" And He answered, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me: for I will tread them in My anger, and trample then in My fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon My garments, and I will stain all My raiment. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed is come." To all who trust Him, our

great Judah-Jesus is still “mighty to save.” All blood-bedewed from Calvary, He cries, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” To every sincere penitent, He still speaks in righteousness and says, “I washed My garments in wine, and My clothes in the blood of grapes when I trod the winepress of Jehovah’s wrath for Your sake; when there was none to help, My own arm brought salvation unto Me, but it was for you that I suffered.” Oh, believe Him, sinner! Trust Him and so become a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and then go forth to serve Him and to praise Him all your days–and to glorify Him forever. Let us all go our way still singing the praises of our blessed Lord and Master–

“Let Him be crowned with majesty
Who bowed His head to death;
And be His honors sounded high
By all things that have breath!
Jesus, our Lord, how wondrous great
Is your exalted name!
The glories of Your heavenly state
Let the whole earth proclaim!”

Ge 49:10 • Shiloh

SERMON 1157

S*hiloh*

"Until Shiloh comes; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be."

Genesis 49:10

THE dying Patriarch was speaking of his own son, Judah, but while speaking of Judah, he had a special eye to our Lord, who sprang from the tribe of Judah. Everything, therefore, which he says of Judah, the type, he means with regard to our greater Judah, the Antitype, our Lord Jesus Christ. You will remember how Jacob gathered his 12 sons around his bed and, addressing them individually as representatives of the 12 tribes that bear their names, uttered different predictions, and gave to each a special

blessing. After first addressing Reuben, Simeon and Levi, he proceeds to salute Judah in words full of majesty–"Judah, you are he whom your brethren shall praise." A happy expression, for the word, "Judah," signifies "praise." The name was given to him by his mother as expressing her gratitude to God at his birth.

It is now confirmed to him by his father, who discerns in it a presage of his character and his destiny. And verily this is true of Jesus. If the virgin mother hailed His advent, how much more do His grateful Brethren laud His career! Do not His Brethren recognize in Him a Leader and Commander, a Savior and a Friend? Is it not here, on earth, our sweetest employment, and will it not be in Heaven our highest delight to praise His name? The praise we bestow on men is mere flattery–the praise we receive from men is insincere. But Jesus has a peerless name and His Brethren derive from Him priceless benefits.

In Jesus are fulfilled the dreams of Joseph. The sun and the moon and the 11 stars all bow before Him! All the sheaves make obeisance unto His sheaf. Let Him be crowned with majesty who bowed His head to death is the common verdict of all the Brotherhood of the House of God. "Your hands shall be at the neck of Your enemies." As one that gets his hands upon the neck of his prey, stops its breath and destroys it–or as one who seizes his enemy by the throat and flings him down to death. How true has this been of Jesus! He has laid His hands upon the neck of His

enemies. When He came to the Cross, fought foot to foot with the old Serpent, and there vanquished sin and death and Hell for us, it was a terrible battle, but it ended in a splendid victory, of which we shall never cease to sing!

Nor do we doubt but the hands of Jesus Christ are at this moment on the neck of His enemies. They may be very rebellious, and, for a time, they may seem to get the ascendancy–but He has got the upper and as surely as Truth and righteousness must flourish and prevail–as surely as Jehovah is the living God, the kingdom of Christ will yet break in pieces all the powers that resist it. “He shall break them as with a rod of iron: He shall dash them in pieces like potters' vessels.” “Your father’s children shall bow down before you.”

To the descendants of Judah in the persons of David and Solomon the whole nation gave allegiance. But worship of a higher order, homage of deeper significance and adoration from a wider circle pertain to Him, for whom our Father in Heaven demands of all His faithful children love, honor, and obedience. “Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, you are gone up.” And how does this describe the Savior–that “Lion of the tribe of Judah”–that strong and mighty Lion who entered into conflict with the lion of the Pit and overcame him! From the prey He has gone up again, up into His Glory–gone up beyond the stars, up to the right hand of the Infinite Majesty–there to sit in perpetual peaceful triumph.

“He stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion.” The lion may have been an emblem that befitted the son of Jesse. The lion couching might have been fitly chosen for his heraldic device, when the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies and of Saul. Yet with how much more propriety may this emblem be emblazoned on the arms of Prince Emmanuel! Did He not stoop down? Was ever such a stoop as His? Let Him be crowned with majesty who bowed His head to death! It is for this that He deserves to conquer, because He was willing to submit to shame and death, itself, for the sake of His people. How glorious is it to think that He has gone up, seeing that He once came down! Who should deserve such honors but He who laid such honors aside for a while?

“Who shall rouse Him up?” A grand question! Who shall rouse up the Lion of the tribe of Judah? Who dare do it? Who can stand against Him? He is a Lamb, gentle and tender. “A bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench.” But let Him be provoked–then fiercer than a lion that roars from the forest will He be upon His foes! So shall it come to pass on that tremendous day when He will ease Himself of His adversaries and shake Himself clear of all His enemies. Do you not remember these terrible words of His–“Beware, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there are none to deliver”? “The scepter shall not

depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come."

The sovereignty remained with Judah. It continued to be the royal tribe till the prophetic epoch. When other tribes lost their peculiar position and their positive distinctiveness, Judah still remained–and it survives in the common appellation of the Hebrew people to this day. The Israelites are more commonly called Jews than by any other name. Jesus, the tribe of Judah, is the King of the Jews, even though they reject Him. Over His head upon the Cross was written the indelible Truth in letters of Hebrew, Greek and Latin, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Yes, He is King of all faithful Jews and of all believing Gentiles at this hour–with a sovereignty wider than that of emperors–yes, as wide as the dwelling places of all mankind! He is "King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Of Shiloh it is the Patriarch speaks when, with the vision of a Seer, he describes the grand climax. Before the dim organs of his sight he saw all his 12 sons gathered to take leave of their dying sire. Before the beaming eyes of his faith he beheld the gathering of all their distant posterity, or perhaps of all the kindreds of the earth to greet with glad acclaim the everlasting King, of whose kingdom there shall be no end! "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." This simply and pointedly does Jacob refer to the Lord Jesus Christ by the name of Shiloh. Of that name and of that prophecy I shall try to speak.

First, let the title, “SHILOH,” and secondly the TESTIMONY, “To Him shall the gathering of the people be,” engage our attention. The title, “SHILOH.” What an old word it is! What an old world word! I should not wonder if it was one of Jacob’s own coining. A pet name is often the product of peculiar love. Tender affection takes this kindly turn. Those whom we fondly regard, we familiarly call by some other name than chance has bequeathed or choice bestowed. Not content with the names that others understand or use, there is often a new mode of recognition between two who love each other, as much as to say, “You are to me what you are to none upon earth beside me.”

Even God gives to His people new names–and I do not wonder if they give to Him new names. Well may Believers have each a favorite name for Jesus. Which name of your Lord do you love the best? If the question were passed round, perhaps some would say–and the majority might–“Jesus, the name divinely sweet.” Another would say–

“Sweeter sounds than music knows

Charm me in Emmanuel’s name.”

That is the choice name. Others, it may be, might put in a claim for pre-eminence to the title of, “The Well-Beloved,” which always seems to me to have a great charm about it. And if George Herbert were here, you know he would say, “How sweetly does ‘My Master’ sound!” “My Master!” That was the name he loved to call

his Lord. Well, Jacob's name for Jesus was, "Shiloh," and it is so long ago since he called Him Shiloh that I do not wonder that we have almost forgotten the meaning of it.

He knew it had a wealth of meaning as it came from his lips and the meaning is still there. But the well is deep and those that have studied the learned languages have found this to be a word of such rare and singular occurrence that it is difficult, with any positive certainty, to define it. Not that they cannot find a meaning, but that it is possible to find so many meanings of it! Not that it is not rich enough, but that there is an embarrassment of riches! It may be interpreted in so many different ways. I will give you, one by one, some of the meanings that have been proposed. There is something to be said for each one. Though I shall not trouble you with the names of the learned authors who stand up for each particular translation, as that would be useless, I will take care to put last the one which I conceive to be the best, has the most authority, and will probably commend itself to you as the most acceptable.

Some maintain that the word," Shiloh," signifies "sent." Like that word you have in the New Testament, "He said to him, go to the pool of Siloam, which is, by interpretation, Sent." You observe the likeness between the words Siloam and Shiloh. They think that the words have the same meaning, in which case Shiloh, here, would mean the same as Messiah–the Sent One–and would indicate that Jesus Christ was the Messenger, the Sent One of God, and came to

us, not at His own instance, and at His own will, but commissioned by the Most High–authorized and anointed to that end.

Here let us stop a minute. We rejoice to know that whatever this title means, it is quite certain that Jesus Christ was sent. It is a very precious thing to know that we have a Savior, but often it has cheered my heart to think that this dear Savior who came to save me did not come as an amateur, unauthorized from the courts of Heaven, but He came with the credentials of the Eternal Father, so that, whatever He has done, we may be sure He has done it in the name of God.

Jehovah will never repudiate that which Jesus has accomplished! God has set Him forth to be a Propitiation. He is a Mediator of God's own sending. He is our Substitute, but He is a Substitute of God's own finding. "I have laid help upon One that is mighty." So says the Oracle and who shall dispute it? "The Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." It is the Lord that has done it! An ambassador who had no credentials from the court he represented would be but a dubious blessing to the people. But when as a plenipotentiary, with full authority from his sovereign, he comes with terms of peace, he might well be received without hesitation or opposition.

Sinner, have you received the Savior, Jesus? You profess to acknowledge the God who sent Him, but know that in turning from the Emissary you are spurning the Sovereign! If you deny Jesus,

you defy God Himself–yes, you make God a liar because you have not believed His testimony concerning His Son. Beloved, do you welcome Jesus Christ as being sent to you personally? When you have labored under a sense of sin, burdened to the very ground with trouble of conscience, was Jesus ever sent to you to say, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth"? Was He ever sent to lead you to look? Did you look unto Him and were you lightened?

Oh, then, you will forever bless His name, the name of the Most High, who sent such an One that He might lift you up out of your miseries, bring the bandaged ones out of the dungeon and set the captives free! Dwell, sweetly dwell, upon this meaning of the word Shiloh. If it means "sent," there is great sweetness in it. Others have referred it to a word, the root of which signifies the Son. Upon such a hypothesis the name would be strictly appropriate to our Lord. He is the "Son of God." He is the "Son of Man." He was the "Son of Judah." He was the "Son of David." "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." Let us linger for a while upon this–"Until Shiloh"–"Until the Son comes."

Be the annotation right or wrong, Jesus is the Son of God! He that has come to save us is Divine. No angel could bear the stupendous burden of redemption. Sooner might angels create than redeem, but they can do neither the one nor the other! They can only sing the high praises of Him who is able to do both! Who but God Himself

could snatch a sinner from Hell? God has done it! He that died upon the Cross was none other than He that made the world! Trust the Divine Savior, O sinner! If you have had any doubts about the sufficiency of Jesus Christ to save, cast them all aside, for, if He is the Son of the Highest, and, "God over all, blessed forever," they that rest in Him shall never be confounded.

The Son of God is He, but He is also the Son of Man, and this is an equal joy to us. Jesus Christ is "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," a man like ourselves. Though He is now in Heaven, think not that He is transformed into a spirit there, or that He has discarded our Nature, or disowned our flesh and blood. Oh, no! After He was risen from the dead He appeared to His disciples and ate with them–He partook of a fish and of honeycomb to show that He was not spirit, but flesh. He said, "Handle Me, and see, a spirit has not flesh and bone: as you see I have." In that very body of His He has gone up into His Glory! And today, at the right hand of God–there He sits–a man clothed in a body like our own!

Oh, Beloved! Let not terror frighten us, or misgivings keep us back from a High Priest that can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, a dear Savior who is not ashamed to call us Brethren! "This man receives sinners." Oh, Sinners! may you be willing to be received by Him! Let us bless Him as the Son–the Son of God, the Son of Man. A third meaning has been given to the word, "Shiloh," which rather paraphrases, than translates it. The passage, according

to certain critics, would run something like this–"Until He comes to whom it belongs, to whom it is, for whom it is reserved." Or, as Ezekiel puts it, "Overturn, until He shall come whose right it is, and you will give it Him."

It may mean, then, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah until He shall come whose that scepter is." This meaning is supported by many learned authorities and has its intrinsic value. The scepter belongs to Christ. All scepters belong to Him. He will come, by-and-by, and verify His title to them. Have you not seen the picture that represents Nelson on board a French man-of-war receiving the swords of the various captains he has conquered–while there stands an old sailor, at his side, putting all these swords underneath his arm as they are brought up? I have often pictured to myself our great Commander, the only King by Divine right, coming back to this, our earth, and gathering up the scepters of the kings in sheaves and putting them on one side, and collecting their crowns–for He alone shall reign King of kings and Lord of lords!

When the last and greatest of all monarchs shall come a second time, "without a sin-offering unto salvation"–oh, the glory of His triumph! He has a right to reign! If ever there was a king by nature, and by birth, it is the Son of David! If ever there was one who would be elected to the monarchy by the suffrages of all His subjects, it is Jesus. How often do we sing–

"Bring forth the royal diadem,

And crown Him Lord of all”?

And we cannot repeat it too often! Our hearts and lips ought to be always saying, “Crown Him, crown Him; crowns become the victory brow.” His is the right to reign! Dear Souls, acknowledge that right. If you have never acknowledged it, acknowledge it now. “Kiss the Son, lest He is angry and you perish from the way, while His wrath is kindled but a little.”

You that love Him and have made Him your King, oh, kiss His feet again! Let Him have your highest homage, your purest love, your perpetual service! Was never such a King as You are, O Jesus! “The chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely.” Let Him be crowned with majesty forever and ever! To Him the royalty belongs, for Him it is reserved. The interpretation, however, which has the most support, and which I think has the fairest claim to be accorded correct, is that which derives the word, “Shiloh,” from the same root as the word, “Salem.” This makes it signify peace. “Until the Peace, or the Peace-Bearer, or the Peace-Giver,” or, if you like it better, “the Rest, or the Rest-Maker–shall come.” Select the word you prefer–it will sufficiently represent the sense.

“Until the Peace-Bringer comes, until the Rest-Maker comes.” His advent bounds the Patriarch’s expectation and his desire. Oh, Beloved, what a vein of soul-charming reflection this opens! Do you know what rest means? Such “peace, peace,” such perfect peace as he has whose soul is stayed because he trusts, as the

Prophet Isaiah has it. Have you ever said to yourself, “There is nothing I desire–nothing that I wish for. I am satisfied–perfectly content. I am without a fear, without a dread”? “No,” you say, “I never reached that status!” You may be worth millions of money without ever coming to that pass. All the gold in the world will never fill a man’s heart and you may have broad acres across which a swift horse could hardly rush in a day, but you will not have enough.

All the land in the world cannot fill a heart. You may have all the beauty, rank, honor and fame that ever can come to a human being, and yet say, “Ah, me! I am still wretched.” But full many who have found Jesus have been able to say, “It is enough–I need no more.” Believing in Jesus and learning to yield up everything to His will. Living to His Glory and loving Him supremely, we enjoy peace with God–a “peace that passes all understanding,” which–“keeps our heart and mind” by Jesus Christ. Are we adopted into the family of God?–we are sure that He never cast a child out of the family that was once received into it! Are we made members of the body of Christ? There is no fear of dismemberment–that which is perfected and compacted together cannot be mangled or torn asunder. Our good hope through Grace is not precarious. Well may we sing with the seraphic Toplady–

“Yes, I to the end shall endure,

As sure as the earnest is given.

More happy, but not more secure

Are the glorified spirits in Heaven."

Here is rest!

Man may well take his rest when he has to, when it is all done for him. And that is their gospel. The world's way of salvation is "Do," God's way of salvation is, "It is all done for you; accept and believe." The world, that says, "Do," never does anything! While the Gospel which tells us, "It is all done," imparts such joy and peace within that we spring to our feet ready and willing to do and dare anything for Him who gave Himself up for us! While active and passive obedience spring out of the Doctrines of Grace, nothing but pride and self-righteousness can come out of the religion which prates of merit and prescribes duties to be done in order that you may be saved!

All that ever will be saved were saved on Calvary's bloody tree. Jesus said, "It is finished." Here His humiliation reached its climax. He humbled Himself even unto death. It was finished. Those for whom He died were, then and there, redeemed. The ransom price paid for them exempted them from the penalty of their transgressions, exonerated them from be called upon to suffer for themselves. He had offered a righteousness to God on their behalf and they were accepted because of that righteousness.

Do you say, "I wish I were one of those people"? Do you believe in Jesus? Then you are one of them! Do you trust Jesus? Then you

are saved! The moment a sinner believes and trusts in His crucified Lord, he is pardoned at once–he receives salvation in full through Christ's blood. Do but rest your soul on Jesus and it is done, and peace will enter your soul–oh, such a deep and blessed peace–the like of which is not to be found out of Heaven! Jesus is the great PeaceGiver and Peacemaker–He is our Peace! God grant us to know Him and to understand this aspect of His mediatorial Character. Believe me, my Hearers, I feel in my soul, as I look round upon you, the utmost longing for you all. Oh, that you did know my Lord and the peace He gives!

It is years ago–23 years or more–since I went to Him. I could not believe it possible that He would receive me. I felt myself too great a sinner. How should there be mercy for me? But I heard a sermon from the text, "Look unto Me and be you saved all you ends of the earth!" I never understood it before, but when I came to understand that all I had to do was to look, oh, what a revelation it was to me! No feelings, no works, no doings, no purchase money demanded as a qualification! Christ on the Cross was evidently set forth crucified before my eyes! I did but look, and I was saved! Saved the moment I looked. When I turned to the Scriptures I found that was just what the Scriptures said, "He that believes in Him is not condemned." I did believe it. I did trust. I did simply rest there.

Neither shall I ever forget the rush of joyous feeling that went through my spirit! This was the cessation of long years of

melancholy bordering on despair. This was the coming out into a clear light, which I thank God I have never lost, for, with all the troubles of this material life, I would not change places with any man that breathes! No, nor with the angels before God's Throne! The station and the privilege of angels will not bear comparison with the eternal dignities reserved for the saints. For an angel no redeemer ever died, and no angel will be able to sing, "Worthy is He that has washed me in His blood!" Oh, to be superlatively indebted to the infinite love of Jesus! To be a cleansed sinner and to be put among the children is so enchanting that it is enough to make one say, "Ah, not even an angel would I envy, nor with one of those celestial ministers would I change my happy lot."

I wish you could all sympathize in this. Would that you all had fellowship with us in this Grace wherein we stand! Many of you have, thank God. Some of you have not. What do you poor people do without a Savior? I cannot understand why you, who have so little in this life, do not look out for the promise of a better inheritance! And what do you poor rich people do without a Savior? I pity you most of all, for your lives are generally passed in a very senseless and insipid fashion. With nothing but a round of visits to pay and a few elegant trifles to attend to, like butterflies, you flit from flower to flower! A poor man's time is taken up with hard labor–but you often ask yourselves, and consult one another

how best you can spend the hours and kill the time that hangs heavily on your hands.

If you cannot think upon Christ. If you cannot fall back upon the Covenant of Grace. If you cannot look up to the eternal God and say, "My Father, You are mine, and with You shall I dwell forever," I pity you, whether you are rich or poor! God grant you to have and to enjoy the fullness of the treasure that is in Jesus Christ! Then you can say–

"I would not change my blest estate
With all that earth calls good or great.
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."

Trusting, then, dear Friends, that your faith has identified the Shiloh of Jacob's vision, let us occupy the few minutes that remain us in considering the TESTIMONY which the Patriarch here bears. "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." "UNTO HIM," as the Hebrew runs, "shall the gathering of the peoples be." So wide the circumference thatconverges in this glorious center! It comprehends all the peoples of the Gentiles as well as Jews. Of course it includes the favored nation, but it also takes in the isles afar off–yes, all of us, my Brothers and Sisters! "Unto Him shall the gathering of the peoples be." What joy this announcement should give us! Do you realize that around Jesus Christ, around His Cross, which is the great uplifted standard, the people shall gather?

Just open your eyes and look! If you can see and your eyes have been touched with eye salve, you may perceive the power of attraction by which this magnificent issue is already in progress!

Over yonder in America a poor sinner is seeking eternal life! If he is seeking aright, he is being gathered to Christ. Or, look at home in your own country. Perhaps, tonight, in many thousands of places that are open for Divine worship, the like magnetic influence is at work! I only wish I could hope that there was someone in every assembly that was looking for eternal life! If it is so, they are all looking to Jesus Christ! Cast your eyes, now, to India, or France, or Prussia, or over to Australia–in whatever direction you will–every soul that is in earnest in seeking life is seeking it through Jesus Christ! I see them coming! He is the Center and they are all drawing near to Him. Every soul that is saved is drawn to Jesus–none are saved without Him.

The people gather to Him as their only hope, and all else has failed. They do not fly to Him until they have tried every other hope. Nobody ever comes to Christ until He cannot go anywhere else. The sinner comes to Him by stress of weather–driven in, sometimes, as ships are into harbors of refuge–because they cannot keep pace with it outside the bar. It is when the sinner is in difficulties that he is driven to Jesus Christ–and every soul that is really looking for eternal life in the right place is looking to Jesus and gathering to Jesus! And I see little silver threads going out

from Christ, the Center, from all over the world, drawing men to Himself. I hope there is one of these threads drawing you! Oh, yield to the gentle pressure! Follow it–for it is your only hope!

Look again and you will see that all over the world those that are saved are gathering to Jesus, rallying round Him and accepting Him as their Leader, Instructor and King! The Jews said, "We have no king but Caesar." The Christians say, "We have no king but Jesus." I mean no spiritual Lord–no Teacher, no Leader except Jesus Christ, Himself. "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." His people out of all nations shall come and take His easy yoke and wear it–and find rest unto their souls! And now, at this moment, my eyes can see myriads all over the world who are coming nearer and nearer to Jesus, with instant eager cry, saying, "Draw us, Lord, draw us nearer to Yourself! Make us more like Yourself! Help us to live more to Your Glory."

Is there one of those golden threads drawing you? Then run, if you are drawn, and seek to love your Lord and serve Him better than ever you have done, for "unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." Be assured of this–Christ is the only Center of true unity to His people. There is a society, I believe, for the promotion of the unity of Christendom. I am afraid it does not do much good, or cement much fellowship. The unity of Christendom! That will all depend upon what is the keystone of the arch you are going to build. If you expect there will be a unity of the Greek Church, the

Latin Church and the Anglican Church, I can only say that were all three united, the union of Christians would be as far off as ever!

In the midst of that professed Christendom, but distinct from it, there is an inner Christendom, a secret, sacred brotherhood of real Christians that knows little about these great secular churches. The true Christendom consists of all that worship God in spirit, not having confidence in the flesh. The true Church consists of all that believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and are quickened by the Holy Spirit! The only unity that society could ever get would be a confederation ecclesiastical, to be dominated over by some lordly priest or other. That would certainly be no desirable thing! Christ is the Center of the Church and true unity will be found only in Him. "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be."

Were I to give you a book to read about Jesus Christ, full of love to Him, and when you had read it, if I were to ask you who wrote it, I imagine you would not guess rightly what denomination the man belonged to. Perhaps you will say, "Well, there is a hint in it of Roman Catholicism now and then. But really, it is so good a book I cannot think a Roman Catholic could have written it." "Or," you will say, "it has a little of the Plymouth Brother here and there, and that is not a sweet flavor. But still, I hardly think they could have written it." By-and-by you will say, "I do not know at all. I am at a loss." Often, after reading books which have a savor of Christ in

them, I have felt a love to the author, though I may have found out, perhaps, that he was an ecclesiastical opponent of mine.

I do not care! I love him if he loves my Master! Be he who he may or from where he comes–if he loves Jesus Christ, I love him! When we are down on our knees praying for the kingdom of Christ, or standing up to sing Messiah's praise, it is wonderful how like we are to each other! Mr. Wesley did not like Toplady, and Mr. Toplady did not like Wesley–he called him, "an old fox," and said that he would pluck him, and have him "tarred and feathered." But take up any hymn book you like and you will find, side by side, Charles Wesley's, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," and Top lady's, "Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me"! And which is the better hymn of the two? I am sure I do not know, they are so much alike! So were these men, after all, two blessed souls, for all their mistakes and all their misunderstandings of one another. When you get to the Cross you get together. "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." When you come totalk of Him and what He did–His life and death, His atoning Sacrifice, His glorious conquest of all our foes–then are you agreed! Oh, Brethren, we must, therefore, strive vigorously, and try incessantly to lift Christ up! We want to see, during this year, a great gathering of souls. We shall see it if we lift Christ up! Here is a lot of steel filings among a heap of ashes. How can I separate them? There are a great many ways of trying to do it.

Bring a magnet in–put a magnet into the heap–see how it draws the steel filings away.

In this congregation there is a great number of individuals, and who among them are God's elect I do not, nor can I know. But let me preach Jesus Christ–and Jesus Christ will draw His own! "My sheep hear My voice; I know them and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life." Preach Christ! That is the magnet! He will draw His own to Himself. And, dear Friends, if we want to see more conversions this year than all past years there must be more preaching, more constant preaching of Christ! Christ must be in every sermon and He must be top and bottom, too, of all the theology that is preached–"Jesus Christ and Him crucified"–and nothing else! I am bound to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, for I do not know anything else to preach!

My simplicity is my safeguard. I have often felt to be of Paul's mind–"I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Some are wise to interpret prophecies. I am not. It is enough for me to know about the Cross! Some are able to split a hair–they can divide a hair between the north and the north-west side. I am no logician. If, knowing the terrors of the Lord, I can persuade men to fly to Christ and escape from the wrath to come, I shall fulfill my mission to my heart's delight!

Consider this, all of you Brothers in Christ called to preach the Gospel! Let each of us go back to the first principles of the Gospel

and bring out, again and again, the old, old story of sinners lost and a Savior come to redeem–of guilt sinking man to Hell like a millstone–and the Savior taking all that guilt away! If you preach the blood, the precious blood of Jesus, you set forth the great soul-saving Gospel and you do honor to Him unto whom "shall the gathering of the people be." And, Brothers, by the climax of destiny that is opened up, let the conduct of our daily life be disciplined. Let us aim to gather more and more to Jesus ourselves. We cannot get too near to Him. Be it ours to strive to get closer than ever we have been! Even if a cross should be necessary to raise us, let us not be afraid of the cross, so long as it brings us nearer to Jesus!

You are happiest, healthiest, and holiest when you are nearest to Christ. To Him shall the continual "gathering of the people be." And oh, let us pray, also, that this gathering may go on both among saints and sinners–that saints may gather nearer to Jesus–and that sinners may gather savingly to Him. The text says, "To Him shall the gathering of the people be." It is a faithful saying and we believe it. Not death nor Hell can keep back the Lord's elect from coming to Christ. Come they must and shall, for the Divine decree shall be accomplished, and each one for whom Jesus specially shed His blood shall be saved infallibly, saved beyond all risk–but it is ours to pray for it. Oh, Lord Jesus, it is said, "Unto You shall the

gathering of the people be." Make it so! The gathering shall be worked by Yourself!

"He shall gather the lambs in His arms." It is His to gather the strayed sheep. He gathers together the outcasts. Surely He is the great Gatherer! Well may they be gathered to Him when He, Himself, gathers them! Ask Him to gather your children. Ask Him to gather your dear beloved ones under your roof, your servants, your neighbors. Ask Him to gather them. Ask Him to gather this great city! Oh, what a city it has grown to be! Would God that Jesus had it! It would be a glorious diamond in the state jewels of Christ if He could call London His own! The biggest of cities– would God it were the holiest! Oh, that it were wholly Christ's from one end to the other!

They used to say, in Cromwell's day, that if you walked down Cheapside at a certain hour, you would have heard the voices of family prayer and praise at every house on the whole street, both morning and evening. I know it is not so in any street in London now. We have gone back since the grand old Puritan times. But we will repair to the Throne, again, by God's good Grace, and yet shall there be salt in this city, for the city shall be seasoned through and through with the power of the Gospel of Jesus! Only to your knees! To your knees! To your knees if you would have it so. You would get this fulfilled among your fellow citizens if you would get it first vouchsafed to you as a blessing of your God. Tell Him He has said,

“Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” Hold Him to His word! Plead with Him that He cannot break it and we shall live to see the day, yet. “To Him shall the gathering of the people be.”

Oh, my dear Hearers! as I draw these reflections to a close, one thought passes over my mind to which I must give expression. You will, all of you, either be gathered to Christ to be saved, or else you will have to be gathered, by-and-by, for another purpose. There shall ring out upon the midnight air a trumpet call that shall be loud enough to be heard east and west–south and north! It shall startle all the sleepers, and more than that, it shall arouse the dead! At its sound the sepulcher shall vomit forth its prey and they that are rocked in slumber beneath the waves of the ocean shall hear that trumpet call and rise–the whole mass of Adam’s family–the myriads of all our race! Oh, what an assembly that will be!

The motley throng within these walls is but as a grain of sand compared with the seashore, to the multitudes that will then be congregated! Gather! Gather! You that have been dead these 6,000 years. Gather! Gather! You that were drowned in Noah’s flood–gather! Gather! All you hosts of Egypt and you myriads of Chaldea, and of Babylon, of Persia and of Greece. Gather! You legions of Rome! You myriads of the Middle Ages! You countless millions of China and of swarthy India! And you of the world across the sea! Gather! Gather! Men of every skin and every tongue!

All must gather–and there in the midst of you all shall be the cloud sailing through the air–and on it the Great White Throne of Him whose spotless justice is mirrored in it! There you will stand–and if you have not looked at Christ on the Cross–you will have to look at the Christ upon the Throne! And if you have never trusted Him–you will then have to tremble at Him. Listen how the trumpet sounds! How that clarion rings out again and again and again! And lo, all are there!

And now He comes, whose pomp is beyond conception, and the books are opened. As they are opened, page after page, He reads the story of each man's life. And now He has come to yours. And He reads the page that chronicles this fleeting hour. On such a night, gathered with this great congregation, you were bid to believe in Jesus and bow down before the great Peace Giver. You refused and sealed your doom forever!

Shall it be so? Oh! shall it be so? God grant it may not be so! May there be another book opened, which is the Book of Life, and in that book may your name stand recorded as one who humbly trusted in the finished work of Jesus and therefore were accepted in the Beloved and found mercy on that day! The Lord grant it to every one of you. I may not ever again speak to some of you as long as I live. This, then, I say to you while your ears are open and attentive to my voice–Lay hold on eternal life! Put your trust in Jesus!

And if, Beloved, any of you to whom I am so familiar, to whom I speak so often–if you should depart from the world while I am absent, or if I should never return but find a grave in some distant land–I charge you, meet me on the other side of Jordan! I charge you, meet me at my Master's right hand! I charge you, cling to the atoning Sacrifice by faith and we will meet together where He sits and reigns–our best Beloved–the Judah, the Jesus, whom all His Brethren shall praise–the Shiloh, the Prince of Peace–for whose glorious Second Advent all His saints look, and to whom they shall be gathered in fullness of joy forever and forever. Amen and Amen!

Ge 49:22; De 33:13 • By the Fountain

SERMON 2113

B*y The Fountain*

"Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall."

Genesis 49:22

DEAR friends, we long to have many converts. We count that Church happy to which God adds daily of such as are being saved. But we are very much concerned about the quality of our converts. We do not wish to make up a Church with a number of shallow professors, whose religion lies upon the surface, and is of a doubtful character. We are very anxious that we should have those in our fellowship who are thoroughly converted, richly experienced and fully instructed in the deep things of God.

We would have as our associates people who are established by principle rather than moved by passion. We would earnestly pray to have a company of Believers added to the Church who shall be like Joseph in character–fruitful trees growing by the well, whose branches ran over the wall. Jacob describes Joseph as a fruitful offshoot and he explains his fruitfulness by his position–he is fruitful "by a well." When a vine grows near a well which is always full, and when it is able to send its roots down to drink of the unfailing spring, it may very well be fruitful and send forth many branches.

The point is, to get by the well. Or, to use our second text, to tap "the deep that couches beneath." If we can reach the secret fountains and say to God, with the Psalmist, "All my fresh springs are in You," then shall we find nourishment for our branches and our fruit and leaf will never fail. "Dwell deep" is a prophetic word of much value to Christians. To live upon land-drainage and casual rains may suffice for ordinary plants. But the trees of the Lord which bring forth much fruit need to penetrate below the topsoil and reach the secret fountains of Divine Grace.

Upon that subject I am going to talk this morning. Our desire is that we may each one of us abide in Christ Jesus and be in constant fellowship with the Father through the Holy Spirit, so that we may, in very truth, be rooted by the well and may drink from "the deep that lies under." We would be grounded and settled by living and

lasting union and communion with the Eternal God. We would know the secret of the hidden life and be filled with its fundamental principles, its constraining influences, its spiritual powers. We would drink in such supplies, by secret contact with God, that our outward life would bear ample testimony to our private communion with Heaven.

May the Holy Spirit graciously aid us in our meditations while we first notice that this figure describes Joseph's character–he was all that Jacob styled him. Secondly, that this in itself was a great blessing, for it was used as such by Moses in after years. And thirdly, that it brings with it many other choice favors.

First, THIS DESCRIBES JOSEPH'S CHARACTER. He flourished near to God. He was an offshoot of the old tree and he was rooted deep by a well which always watered him. From his childhood until he died, the main point in Joseph's character was that he was in clear and constant fellowship with God–and therefore God blessed him greatly. He lived to God and was God's servant. He lived with God and was God's child. He looked up to Heaven for daily teaching and comfort. And God was with him so as not only to bless him but to bless others for his sake–as, for instance, the house of Potiphar, first–and afterwards Pharaoh, and all the land of Egypt, and all the famishing nations.

In this respect his branches ran over the wall in scattering blessings far and wide–and all this was the result of living in

constant communion with God. My dear Hearer, you profess to be a Christian, but have you really had dealings with God? I know you have been baptized and you come to the communion table. But have you pressed beyond the signs to the Lord Himself? Is there a root in your religion, and has that root struck deep into spiritual Truth? And have you received the life and power which come from the spiritual Fountain? Can you say with David, "My soul, wait you only upon God. For my expectation is from Him"?

The first blessing in the Book of Psalms is that the godly man should be, "like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither. And whatever he does shall prosper." The great matter is being rooted by the Well–the drawing of supplies from the eternal storehouse of Christ Jesus the Lord–in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell. How can we fail to be fruitful if we draw our life and all its vigor from the Lord Jesus?

Because Joseph lived near to God, he received and retained gracious principles. There is a great difference between religious principle and religious passion. Many persons are religious by starts and fits–according to their company, their feelings, or their whims. According to the influences under which they come, certain people become good, bad, or indifferent. But when a man lives in the Presence of the Lord, he has fixed principles which rule his heart and guide his life. He fears God, not because others fear Him,

but because God is “to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him.”

He believes the revealed Truths of God, not because others believe them, but because he is sure that the Lord has spoken them, and therefore he knows them to be true. If anybody denies the faith, he stands up to it, for it is precious to his heart. His moral conduct and his spiritual life are upright, true, sincere and reverent–not because of the prejudices of education, or the force of example–but because the Lord has placed within him a new heart and a right spirit. He does not resort to another man’s religious cistern. For there is within him “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

He discerns between the Truth of God and error. For he has learned the Gospel for himself by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. He follows after holiness because he walks with the God of Holiness and the Law of the Lord is written upon the tablets of his heart. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus he receives by the witness of the Spirit. It is true to him, whether others receive it or reject it–he could part with anything and everything sooner than quit his hold upon the everlasting Truth of God. This it is to be a tree by a well, to have a religion based upon principles, to live by vital contact with the Lord.

Many nowadays belong to this denomination or to that by pure accident of birth or position. They have never weighed their

opinions in the balances of Scripture. Indeed, many have no idea what their principles are. We have Protestants nowadays who never protest against anything and Nonconformists who conform to everything which is in fashion. All this is bad. Ignorance in reference to Divine Truth is a very fruitful evil. We need an instructed people, if we are to have a fruitful people. Unless we get hold upon the Truth of God by the right hand of clear apprehension and hold it as our heart's treasure, we shall neither know the joy of it in days of calm, nor be held by it in nights of storm. From where came martyrs in times of persecution, but from those who were in living union with God? From whereshall come bold confessors in these apostatizing days, if not from among persons of like character? Unless we get men and women into the Church who, like Joseph, take root in the deep Truth of God's Word, we shall never see the Church in full health and glory.

Joseph showed his character throughout the whole of his life. As a child, his father loved him, as our translators say, "because he was the son of his old age." It would be better to understand the words as meaning, because he was a son of old age. He was old and wise in his ways. He was a youth of great thoughtfulness and his thoughts were much with God. You may judge your waking thoughts by those which come to you in your dreams.

Joseph had dreams at night from God, because in the day he thought of God. No doubt they were supernatural and prophetic

dreams. But I now speak after the manner of men–a dream is often the reflection of the wakeful thought. Joseph, as a youth, dwelt very near to God, and therefore he was forced to enter his protest against the evil conduct of his brothers. “Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.” Soon he became a marked young man–his brothers felt he was not one of themselves and they hated him–called him a dreamer–and took the first occasion to get rid of him.

Jacob’s household was in a very sad condition–even the grossest vice was found among his sons. And young Joseph was a speckled bird among them. By their malice he was sold for a slave into Egypt. But no sooner is he there, than we read, “And the Lord was with Joseph.” Potiphar bought him but the Lord made all that he did to prosper. It is difficult for a slave to become the steward of a great man. But Joseph did so. His master took no account of anything–he left it all absolutely in Joseph’s hands and God blessed the house for Joseph’s sake.

And then there came in his way that great temptation. And you remember his gracious answer, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” God was evidently with him, keeping him in the way of innocence–he could not grieve his God, for his God was his delight. By false accusation he was cast into prison. But we read that “the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.” Soon he became the under-jailer and was helpful to the

prisoners. His branches were always running over the wall in the form of usefulness to others.

The prison was brightened by his presence. And as soon as he was prepared for the position, a straight path was opened for him from the prison to the court of Pharaoh. In the hour of his elevation he did not forget God. When about to interpret the royal dreams, he said, “God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.” He is a young man greatly gifted, and he may miss preferment if he mentions his religion–but this does not daunt him–again and again he says, “God has showed Pharaoh what He is about to do.” On the throne his God is still with him and guides him in all things and he exclaims, “God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

When he sees his aged father, their talk is concerning the Lord God. When he comes to die, he says to his Brethren, “I die but God will be with you.” He gave commandment concerning his bones, that he should not be buried in Egypt, for he was no Egyptian, though he had been lord of the land. He would be carried away to the land of promise in the day when Israel should quit the stranger’s land. Always the Lord his God is the star of Joseph. This is his character–he is in the fear of God all day long.

He was a fruitful bough by a well and that well was his God. This abiding near to God made Joseph independent of externals. His resources were within, and therefore he was not to be injured by

things without. His springs were deep, and therefore not affected by circumstances.

He was not dependent upon family surroundings. At home, the society of his father would nourish his early piety but he was just as gracious in the house of Potiphar. The degrading idolatries of Egypt did not make him unfaithful to the unseen God. Some of you young people not only owe your religious impressions to your parents, but I fear that if you were removed from them you would have no religion of your own. Are my fears correct? It is an anxious time when a lad leaves his home to be apprenticed, or to take his first place. If he has nothing but borrowed religion, he will soon yield to ill company. But if he lives in God, for himself, he will stand.

If he has lived upon his parents as a mistletoe lives on the oak, it will be bad for him. But if he has root in himself and has lived upon God, all will be well. Hereditary religion is hopeful when it is also personal religion, but not else. If you are not living in God on your own account, your religion may as well fail you at once. For it will ultimately do so.

Many professing Christians are, I fear, very much dependent upon revival excitement and the currents of godly society, which are often sufficiently strong to bear with them those who have no living principle. If religion seems to prosper, if many press into the congregation, if large numbers throng the inquiry room, these people are very happy and very earnest. But after the summer-tide

is over, where are they? This is the great burden which every earnest Evangelist has to bear–so many seem born for God in the heat of a revival who, nevertheless, die away when the warmth of zeal is gone.

Oh, that you, my Brethren, may be planted by a well, so that you may never be dried up by drought! Bless God for revivals and never speak against them. But do not live upon them, nor cause your spiritual health to depend upon them. Those who grow upon hotbeds will not be far from dung. There are evil tendencies connected with fanaticism which are to be dreaded. Get down to the well and let your roots drink up the fresh nourishment, which is essential to the sap of your life and to the fruit of your usefulness. Touching the cool spring, you will know where you are when others are so carried away as not to know what they hear or do.

Say to yourselves, each one of you, "I want Christ in my own heart. I want the love of God shed abroad in my own soul. I want not only to talk about heavenly things, but to know and experience them. I desire to be possessed by the Spirit of Truth and to know His power." Be not content to live by the casual shower, or by the artificial watering-pot of special means, or by the mechanical irrigation of routine. But send down the roots of your being into the deep things of God till you tap the great deep of Divine all-sufficiency.

Beloved Friend, I pray you will seek after a spiritual life which is never dependent on outward ordinances. It is a great comfort to be able to hear the Word faithfully preached. And if you hear it, but do not hear it, you miss a great blessing and incur grievous loss. But suppose you are placed where there is no preaching of the Word? Then it will be a happy circumstance if your godliness can survive such a deprivation.

If you were away on some cattle ranch in South America, far from all religious worship–it would be a grand thing to be able to go to your Bible and to your knees and draw near to God alone–and so grow strong enough to send your branches over the wall, by blessing others and beginning to teach or preach for Christ. This is the true way in which vigorous life shows itself. I know that the Lord's Supper is a sacred ordinance and I would have you come to the Lord's Table as often as you can, for He has said, "This do in remembrance of Me."

But if it shall come to pass that you are where no Christian person is near with whom you could break bread–may you have Divine Grace to feed on Jesus Himself! When the tokens of His flesh and blood are denied you, may you be driven to Jesus Himself! Spiritual life loves the outward ordinances, but if it is deprived of them, it survives their absence. For in very deed, heavenly life draws its food from Heaven. Get to God. Oh, get to God through Jesus Christ! An hour's communion with Him means renewed life.

Surely, the cluster of Eshcol must have grown near waters which were ever running. If you would glorify God, live upon God.

I believe–and I am very sorry to have to say it–that a great many nominal Christians live very much upon the minister. I have seen it to be so beyond all question. I have noticed a Church flourish and increase while a certain good man has lived and preached. But when that servant of God has departed, then they have grown cold and have been thinned out and sadly scattered. The weaker sort were drawn and held together by the good man's preaching. And as they cannot hear him, they will hear no one else, and their seats are empty. May this calamity never happen to this congregation. And yet I fear it would be so with many.

In the days of the Judges, the people seemed wonderfully good while the judge lived. But as soon as he was gone they wandered after idols. O my beloved People, may you become so indoctrinated with the Truth of God that you will never leave it! Be it your resolve that you will never hear anything but the Gospel. Love Christ so well that you will never follow any pretended shepherd who would lead you away from Him. Keep to Christ and Him crucified and live on the Doctrines of Grace when your present leader lies asleep in his grave. Keep to the great Lord of love, whoever the preacher may be. Let it be seen that you have struck your roots too deep, and are fed by supplies too permanent,

for you to be dependent upon any man–however much esteemed that man may be.

Above all, it is a great blessing to be so rooted and watered that you can live graciously and uprightly, despite personal interest. There was a time when it seemed the loss of everything for Joseph to keep close to God. A young man can get on well with elder brothers if he will please them by dropping into their habits. But if he opposes them, he will have a sorry time of it. “Joseph, if you want to be happy with Reuben and Simeon and Levi, you must hold your tongue when you see them making free in their morals, or you will bring a hornets' nest about your head.”

If you would be happy at home, you must remember the old proverb, that when you are at Rome you must do as Rome does. This is the wisdom of this world. But Joseph scorns it. No, he cannot help it. He must abide with God and with holiness. What is the result? The Ishmaelites carry him away for a slave. Poor encouragement this for holy youth! In the house of Potiphar, compliance with his mistress seemed an easy way to honor and pleasure. But he could not yield to her base suggestion. He had rather bear the consequences of her hate. She falsely charges him. He comes under his master’s anger, loses his place and is put in prison. But he cannot help it, he must obey his God.

Are you of this true kind? Many will gladly walk with Christ when He wears silver sandals and a golden girdle. But if He walks

barefoot through the mire, they seek other company. Oh, for that godliness which will strengthen you to quit your situation, to lose your wealth, to sacrifice your credit, and to part with your friends sooner than grieve your Lord! Oh, that you may never be unstable as water. For, if so, you will not excel! Your bow will only abide in strength if, like Joseph, the arms of your hands are made strong by the mighty God of Jacob.

You must draw your soul's nourishment from secret fountains and wait upon the Lord where no eye sees you, or you will soon prove barren and unfruitful. To follow your Savior wherever He goes, you must daily derive your life from Him. I cannot close this first head without saying that while Joseph thus was placed in a position of very high independence of all outward things, he was very conscious of his entire dependence upon God. Take the well away and where was the fruitful bough? Remove "the deep that lies under," and then the resources even of so great a character as that of the Prime Minister of Egypt would have been dried up.

We can stand alone with God. But we fall without Him–we can bear the brunt of the battle without a friend or an armor-bearer–but if the Lord does not cover our head we are undone. Like Samson, we can slay the Philistines–

"But if the Lord is once withdrawn,
And we attempt the work alone,
When new temptations spring and rise,

We find how great our weakness is."

Dear young Friends, I exhort you to think for yourselves, and judge for yourselves, and act for yourselves with a holy independence of others. Yet never forget where your strength lies and never rely upon yourselves.

Never resolve to do anything apart from the Lord. Never say, "I am sufficient," but always, in conscious insufficiency, fall back upon that Divine Grace which never fails. Self is a mocker, pride is raging and whoever is deceived thereby is not wise. All your usefulness and all your faithfulness will come to an end unless you fix your entire dependence upon Jehovah, the Beginning and the End of all that is good. Keep by the deep Well of boundless love. Draw from the Fountain of all-sufficiency and may the Lord bless you from now on and forever!

II. This brings me now to notice, under my second head, that THIS IS OF ITSELF A GREAT BLESSING. Moses, in my second text, mentions "the deep that couches beneath," as having its own form of blessing. This was for Joseph's race a blessing. It is a high favor to know the deep things of God, and to enjoy the far-down securities, enjoyments, and privileges of the children of Heaven.

In deep union to God are to be found the very truth and life of godliness. As for outward religion, what is it? You may practice all the ordinances without fault, and yet you will be godless unless your spirit has had converse with the Lord. A good man in

Scripture is said to be a godly man. He is a man of God–God's man–he lives for God, he lives with God, he lives on God. If you do not believe in God, love God, glorify God–all the outward forms on earth, all the rites that God has given–cannot make up a religion for you that is worth a single penny.

You may be orthodox in creed, as I hope you will be. But unless you really grasp and apprehend the things of orthodoxy and so come to the God of Truth and the Holy Spirit of Truth, you have a set of words and nothing more. A man may possess the catalogue of a library and yet be without a book. And so may you know a list of doctrines and yet be a stranger to the Truth of God. You may have in your hand a map of a fine estate and a list of all the treasures in the mansion–yet you may not have a place where to set your foot. A knowledge of the technicalities of theology is of small use unless you enjoy the Truths of God to which they refer. You must know the Lord and abide in Christ.

Do not say, "I have joined the Church, Sir, and attend the Prayer Meetings, and take my share among the workers." Yes, I know. But true religion is more than this. It is repentance towards God. It is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. "Dear Sir," cries one, "I accept what you say. And dispute none of your teaching." That may be. But this does not content me. If you receive my teaching as the Truth of God, I am sorry. I desire you to receive it as the Word of God. Go to the Bible for yourself. Seek to

be taught by the Spirit of God. Ask to have the Truth of God written upon your heart by the Holy Spirit. You have not received the Truth of God rightly unless it comes to you with power as the Word of the living God.

When a man like Joseph can be compared to a fruitful tree by a well because he is rooted in fellowship with God, he has the blessedness of drawing his supplies from secret but real, sources. His life is hid and the support of his life is hidden, too. The world knows him not. But the secret of the Lord is with him. There is the tree, and there is the fruit–these can be seen by all. But none can see the roots which are the cause of the clusters, nor the deep that lies under, from which those roots derive their supply. God's hidden Ones are a wonder unto many. Oh, to dwell with Him who is invisible and so to become ourselves partakers of an unseen life!

The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. Oh, to have eternal life and to be heirs of an eternal heritage! It is a great thing to cultivate the inner life, for it is the true life. But unless a man dwells with God in secret, he forgets the inward life–he is so taken up with washing the outside of the cup and the platter, that his inward part remains very wickedness. This will never do, for the Lord looks at the heart. We must see to the inward.

The supplies of such a man are inexhaustible. The well is not drawn dry, and the deep that lies under is never emptied. Plants

dependent upon irrigation may pine in the drought of summer. But a tree that strikes its roots into the well does not see when heat comes but its leaf is green. It can never exhaust the great fountains. It may drink on and on and yet never diminish its supplies. "God all-sufficient" is a glorious name. Infinite mercy is a storehouse for a starving world. The Lord's own word is, "My grace is sufficient for you."

The man who dwells near to God has supplies which can never be cut off. We have heard of cities which have been surrounded by armies and were never captured by assault but were compelled to surrender because the besiegers cut off the water supply–broke down the aqueducts–and so subdued them by thirst. Jerusalem was never thus captured, for there were deep wells within the city itself which never ceased to flow. Ah, my Brethren, he that has a well of living water within him is beyond the enemy's power!

We can go to God when we are not allowed to go to the service. The priest took away the boy's Bible. "Yes," said the child, "but you cannot take away those twelve chapters of John which I have learned." The malice of man may deny us a place of worship, but it cannot prevent our worshipping the Lord, wherever we may be. Every means of Divine Grace may be denied the Believer, but the Grace of the means will still come to him. God grant that neither sickness, nor traveling, nor watching at the bedside may keep us away from the assembly of His people. But if ever it should so

happen, may we then so dwell in God that the upper springs may flow freely and feed the very roots of our spirit!

Supplies gained by nearness to God Himself are constant. Grace is not intermittent. It is not a land spring, but a well. Joseph had Divine Grace as an old man, even as he had it as a youth. A religion that ebbs and flows is a poor thing. We should desire the constancy of the sun and not the changing of the moon. We may have Grace day by day, every day and all day. If yours is a spring from off the deep that lies under, it will be so. I do not say that your root can always take in the same measure of water from the well of life. But I do say that it will always be there for you to take. And I think, also, that to a large extent, you will be able to partake of it with constancy.

Your root will be always in the well and so you may always drink to the full. It is wonderful how trees will grow if planted close by abundant water. I hope to see, before long, a palm which was planted in my presence some years ago. It was one of a number of palms which make a long line in a friend's garden. They were all of one size when I saw them brought from the nursery, and the next year they all seemed pretty much upon an equality. But very soon this particular palm outstripped its fellows, and now it towers high above all the rest, till you might suppose it to be many years older.

My very good friend, the owner of the garden, said to me, "You know why this palm has so far outgrown the rest? It has sent its

roots down below, into that large reservoir and so its life is powerful." The Arabs say that the palm tree loves to have its roots in the water and its head in the fire–it would have a flowing river below and the burning sun above. Ah, Beloved, may we also grow as the palm tree! And if we get our roots down into the Divine fountains and can sun ourselves in the love of the Lord, we shall grow rapidly and surely.

The supplies of the Believer who dwells deep are pure, as well as full. Grace through the means is apt to be diluted. But when we receive it from God alone, it is Grace, indeed. The best of pipes are apt to mar the water's taste. All common watercourses mix earth with the water. But "the deep that lies under" is out of reach of defilement. If you can draw from the pure well of the undefiled Gospel, you will do well. Among the Alps how often have I wished to drink! And the guide has forbidden me and told me to wait a little. And then we have come to a leaping fount, most cool and delicious–far better than the streams which, as they ran along, had gathered earth, and decay and evil life.

Did you ever know a stream in England that ran for half a mile without someone turning it into a sewer? And so it would seem at this time, as if God's own Truth could not be found in the teachings of the pulpit–pure and undefiled as given forth in Scripture by His Spirit. Do we not fear, lest with all our care, we should tincture the infallible Revelation with our thoughts? O Believer, go at once to

your God for teaching! Again I remind you of David's words–"My soul, wait you only upon God. For my expectation is from Him."

Draw your supplies at first hand. Do as he did who had been made ill with impure milk–he kept a cow of his own. Instead of expositors, read the Bible for yourself. In Bible light the Bible is best seen. If the human water pot fails, it will not matter if you are "a fruitful bough by a well."

III. Lastly, I would remind you that THIS BRINGS WITH IT OTHER BLESSINGS. If you are by the well, sending your roots into its waters, you will obtain fruitfulness. A fruitful tree is one which is well sustained at the root. Dear Friends, it is by no means wisdom to cry, "I will work hard and try to bear fruit." Fruit is not produced by work. No vine toils to produce grapes. It buds and blossoms and bears fruit in the order of its nature.

We have a great deal of fruitless working nowadays. Religion is pumped up. Devotion is too often mechanical. Godliness is supplanted by artificial excitement. And love to God by perpetual fussiness. Zeal for God is counterfeited by "much ado about nothing." If the inner, secret life, is in good order, precious fruit is brought forth both by sun and moon. The gardener never says, "It is time for me to go and work a hundredweight of grapes out of my vine." Oh dear, no! Beginning early in the year he spies a shoot, and by-and-by there is a tiny flower. And then leaves appear and so

on, in regular order–and only at last can he hope to gather the rich cluster from the vine.

There is no noise in the production of the vintage. You never heard a vine groaning, nor saw it sweating, nor noticed it straining a single shoot. If vines get their roots down into good soil, they bring forth fruit, as it were, naturally. May the Lord make us bring forth holiness through the force of the new nature! May He put into us immortal principles and may He sustain them by His own Personal power! And then, naturally and joyfully, in its season, we shall bring forth fruit to His praise and glory, by His Grace.

The next blessing that came with this was unselfishness. Joseph was a bough whose "branches ran over the wall." He extended his influence beyond his own family. We shall bear but little fruit if our branches are kept within the narrow space of self and relatives. Cultivate godliness for the sole sake of yourself and you will never be very godly. But abound in it for God's sake, and for love of those whom Jesus has redeemed, and you will be godly, indeed. Live to love. For to love is to live when the love is set upon God. You should go over the wall to your ungodly neighbor, to the infidel without Christ, to the heathen and the castaway. You should extend your usefulness where none expected it to grow. Then you will be a blessing to many who were far off from you and your God.

I heard of one whose last petition was that God would bury his influence with him. An awful prayer! It was good only so far that it evidenced a recognition of his life's mistake and some sort of repentance for it. But he was asking for that which could not be granted. For not even God Himself ever kills a man's influence. The world's poet truly says, "The evil that men do lives after them." Most surely the evil lives, even if the good expires. Yet, when we are dead and buried, if we have lived unto God and lived upon God, our branches will run over the wall of the cemetery and our voices will be heard from amid the silence of the sepulcher. Is it not written, "He being dead yet speaks"?

A third blessing that comes with this is fixedness. A fruitful tree by a well, sending its roots down to the water, is well-rooted and cannot be torn from its place. It would not be fruitful if it were not stable. If a tree has no living root, you may pull it up, if you please. But if it is living and growing and drawing up its nutriment from the depth, its roots will furnish it with mighty anchorage. Can you stir a man who has once received into his heart the doctrine of the atoning sacrifice? Not if he has found in it a refuge for despair.

The logician may prove that the death of Christ did not mean Substitution and Propitiation. A fig for his logic–"we have received the Atonement," and know better. The Doctrines of Grace which I have preached to you, have a hold upon the heart and intellect, like that of certain colors when the wool is dyed ingrain. But when

these doctrines have not been sufficiently preached, people are easily carried away with every wind of doctrine. Brethren, the old evangelical doctrine of Luther and Calvin had about it power to create enthusiasm. See how the Huguenots mustered to a sermon when it was death to hear a reformed preacher!

Geneva sent forth men who could gather crowds in regions crimsoned with the blood of their Brethren. Why did the multitudes come together? Would any man jeopardize his life to hear a "modern-thought" sermon? My Brethren, there is something in the old Gospel worth hearing–there is an Election of Grace most precious, a Redemption which really redeemed and a work of Divine Grace within which assures Final Perseverance and eternal Glory. The wish-wash of today's preaching would have gained the preacher in "the desert" no congregation. But when untold treasures are displayed, saints will come to hear of them.

That Truth of God, which is a matter of life and death to you, will take hold of your heart and soul and you will never part with it. I long to see a race of real men who will know the Truth and believe it in real fashion–men who have received a kingdom which cannot be moved–palaces of God whose foundations are in the rock.

Another privilege of personal nearness to God–such men enjoy safety. Hear how Jacob puts it–"The archers have sorely grieved him and shot at him and hated him." If you live near to God you will be the target of the ungodly, and the hatred of the world will

cause you grief of heart. It cannot be avoided, for the seed of the serpent will nibble at the heel of the seed of the woman. Even to this day is Joseph sold into Egypt and separated from his Brethren–

"No slacker grows the fight,
No feebler is the foe."

Keep close to God and His Word and you will be counted a Nazarene among your Brethren. But this shall not harm you. For it is added, "His bow abode in strength and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Deriving his strength from God, Joseph lived above the rage of men. He who keeps His people neither slumbers nor sleeps. Only live upon God–let your expectations be from God only–and you cannot be overcome of adversaries.

They that trust in princes will find them fickle. They that rely upon the multitude will find them lighter than vanity. But they that trust in the Lord shall not be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end. Therefore, strike deep and draw your life from the well. Besides that, Joseph received enrichment. Notice how Moses puts it–he mentions quite a treasury of jewels. The best pearls come out of deep seas. He mentions the precious things of Heaven, the precious fruit brought forth by the sun, the precious things put forth by the moon, the chief things of the ancient mountains, the precious things of the earth–and the fullness thereof–and the goodwill of him that dwelt in the bush.

All these blessings came upon the top of the head of him who was a fruitful bough by a well. Many of you religious people know nothing about precious things. Many professors live on the mere skins and husks of Divine Truth. They have never tasted the sweet kernels. A little religion is a mournful thing–they that drink deep get down to the sweetness. Many people have religion enough to make them wretched. If they had seven times as much, they would be joyful. The restraints and duties and formalities of religion have in them none of the fat things full of marrow, nor of the wines on the lees well refined.

The best wines in God's House are in the cellar. Those who never go downstairs have no idea of the secret sweetness. A deep experience is a precious experience. The Lord fills certain of His people with pain and grief, that they may know His choicer consolations. We are too apt to let our roots run along just under the surface and so we get no firm footage. But trouble comes and then we grow downward, rooted in humility. Then we pierce the treasures of darkness and know the deep things of God. If you want a rich Christian, find a man who lives with God in secret and goes deep into Divine Truth.

A shallow Believer is a poor and weak Believer. But the strong Christian is the man who lives on God and will not be put off with anything short of fellowship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This benediction, with which we close our public service, should be the

perpetual benediction of every day. Dear Friends, I might add a thousand things but I will not. I will only say this–do, I pray you, dive into the depths. You that are beginning with holy things, begin deep and take sure root. See how soon buildings fall if they have insufficient foundations! Find your foundation in the Rock.

You that have long known the Lord, endeavor to know more and more of Him. Send out more roots into yet deeper and richer ground. Get more nearly to the very heart of God. In an evil time like this, take firm hold. You cannot overcome the drift of an ill current unless you let down your anchor. Yes, and at such a time you may be unusually careful and let down four anchors from the stern, as well as the one in the proper place. We need to be anchored stem and stern in these days. We need to be held to Christ by hooks of steel. Heart, and head, and hand, and every other power had need take hold on the everlasting Truths of God.

For such are the winds that blow today, that we shall be carried about by them like thistle upon the hills, if we have nothing but our own strength to rely upon. God grant us to get closer to Him than ever and to stay there. And may He grant us yet further to use all our opportunities for usefulness, and all our life for fruitfulness to His glory! Amen.

Ge 49:23 • Joseph Attacked by the Archers

SERMON 0017

Joseph Attacked By The Archers

"The archers have sorely grieved him, shot at him and hated him: But his bow abode in strength and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob (from thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel)."

Genesis 49:23, 24

It must have been a fine sight to see the hoary-headed Jacob sitting up in his bed while he bestowed his parting benediction upon his twelve sons. He had been noble in many instances during his life–at the sleeping place of Bethel, the brook of Jabbok and the halting of Peniel. He had been a glorious old man, one before whom we might bow down with reverence and truly say, "There

were giants in those days." But his closing scene was the best. I think if ever he stood out more illustrious than at any other time, if his head were at any one season more than another, encircled with a halo of glory, it was when he came to die.

Like the sun at setting, he seemed then to be the greater in brilliance, tingeing the clouds of his weakness with the glory of grace within. Like good wine which runs clear to the very bottom, unalloyed by dregs, so did Jacob, till His dying hour, continue to sing of love, of mercy and of goodness, past and future. Like the swan, which (as old writers say) sings not all its life until it comes to die, so the old Patriarch remained silent as a songster for many years. But when he stretched himself on his last couch of rest, he stayed himself up in his bed, turned his burning eye from one to another and although with a hoarse and faltering voice, he sang a sonnet upon each of his offspring such as earthly poets, uninspired, cannot attempt to imitate.

Looking upon his son Reuben, a tear was in his eye, for he recollected Reuben's sin. He passed over Simeon and Levi, giving some slight rebuke. Upon the others he sung a verse of praise as his eyes saw into the future history of the tribes. By-and-by his voice failed him and the good old man, with long drawn breath, with eyes pregnant with celestial fire and heart big with Heaven, lifted his voice to God and said, "I have waited for Your salvation, O God." He rested a moment on his pillow and then, again, sitting up,

recommenced the strain, passing briefly by the names of each. But oh, when he came to Joseph, his youngest son but one–when he looked on him–I picture that old man as the tears ran down his cheeks.

There stood Joseph, with all his mother Rachel in his eyes–that dearly loved wife of his–there he stood, the boy for whom that mother had prayed with all the eagerness of an eastern wife. For a long twenty years she had tarried a barren woman and kept no house but then she was a joyful mother and she called her son "increase." Oh, how she loved the boy! And for that mother's sake, though she had been buried for some years and hidden under the cold sod, old Jacob loved him, too. But more than that, he loved him for his troubles. He was parted from him to be sold into Egypt.

His father recollected Joseph's trials in the round house and the dungeon and remembered his royal dignity as prince of Egypt. And now with a full burst of harmony–as if the music of Heaven had united with his own, as when the widened river meets the sea and the tide coming up does amalgamate with the stream that comes down and swells into a broad expanse–so did the glory of Heaven meet the rapture of his earthly feelings.

Giving vent to his soul, he sung, "Joseph is a fruitful bough even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him, shot at him and hated him: But his bow abode in strength and the arms of his hands were made strong

by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob (from thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel): Even by the God of your father, who shall help you; and by the Almighty, who shall bless you with blessings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies under, blessings of the breasts and of the womb: The blessings of your father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his Brethren" (Gen. 49:22-26).

What a splendid stanza with which to close! He has only one more blessing to give. But surely this was the richest which he conferred on Joseph.

Joseph is dead, but the Lord has His Josephs now. There are some still who understand by experience–and that is the best kind of understanding–the meaning of this passage, "The archers have sorely grieved him, shot at him and hated him: But his bow abode in strength and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God ofJacob."

There are four things for us to consider this morning–first of all, the cruel attack–"the archers have sorelygrieved him, shot at him and hated him." Secondly, the shielded warrior–hissecret strength–the glorious parallel drawn between Joseph and Christ–"from thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel."

First, then, we commence with THE CRUEL ATTACK. “The archers have sorely grieved him.” Joseph’s enemies were archers. The original has it, “masters of the arrows,” that is, men who were well skilled in the use of the arrow. Though all weapons are alike approved by the warrior in his thirst for blood, there seems something more cowardly in the attack of the archer than in that of the swordsman. The swordsman plants himself near you, foot to foot and lets you defend yourself and deal your blows against him. But the archer stands at a distance, hides himself in ambush and, without your knowing it, the arrow comes whizzing through the air and perhaps penetrates your heart.

Just so are the enemies of God’s people. They very seldom come foot to foot with us. They will not show their faces before us. They hate the light, they love darkness. They dare not come and openly accuse us to our face, for then we could reply. But they shoot the bow from a distance, so that we cannot answer them. Cowardly and dastardly as they are, they forge their arrowheads and aim them, winged with Hell-bird’s feathers, at the hearts of God’s people. The archers sorely grieved poor Joseph.

Let us consider who are the archers who so cruelly shot at him. First, there were the archers of envy. Secondly, thearchers of temptationslander and calumny.

First, Joseph had to endure the archers of ENVY. When He was a boy, his father loved him. The youth was fairand beautiful. In

person, he was to be admired. Moreover, he had a mind that was gigantic and an intellect that was lofty. But, best of all in him dwelt the Spirit of the living God. He was one who talked with God. A youth of piety and prayerfulness. Beloved of God, even more than he was of his earthly father. Oh, how his father loved him! In his fond affection, he made him a princely coat of many colors and treated him better than the others–a natural but foolish way of showing his fondness.

Therefore, his brothers hated him. Full often did they jeer at the youthful Joseph when retired to his prayers. When he was with them at a distance from his father's house, he was their drudge, their slave. The taunt, the jeer, did often wound his heart and the young child endured much secret sorrow. On an ill day, as it happened, he was with them at a distance from home and they thought to slay him. But upon the entreaty of Reuben they put him into a pit, until, as Providence would have it, the Ishmaelites did pass that way. They then sold him for the price of a slave, stripped him of his coat and sent him away naked.

They knew not and they cared not where, so long as he might be out of their way and no longer provoke their envy and their anger. Oh, the agonies he felt–parted from his father, losing his brothers. Without a friend he was dragged away by cruel man-sellers, chained upon a camel it may be, with fetters upon his hands. Those who have borne the shackles and fetters, those who have felt that

they were not free men, that they had not liberty, might tell how sorely the archers grieved him when they shot at him the arrows of their envy. He became a slave, sold from his country, dragged from all he loved. Farewell to home and all its pleasures–farewell to a father's smiles and tender cares.

He must now be a slave and toil where the slaves' taskmaster takes him. He must be exposed in the market, he must be stripped in the streets. He must be beaten, he must be scourged, he must be reduced from man to an animal, from the free man to the slave. Truly the archers sorely shot at him. And, my Brethren, do you hope, if you are the Lord's Josephs, that you shall escape envy? I tell you, no–that green-eyed monster, envy, lives in London as well as elsewhere and he creeps into God's Church. Oh, it is hardest of all to be envied by one's Brethren. If the devil hates us, we can bear it. If the foe's of God's Truth speak ill of us, we buckle up our harness and say, "Away, away, to the conflict."

But when the Friends within the house slander us. When Brethren who should uphold us turn into our foes–and when they try to tread down their younger Brethren–then, Sirs, there is some meaning in the passage, "The archers have sorely grieved him, shot at him and hated him." But blessed be God's name, it is sweet to be informed that, "His bow abode in strength." None of you can be the people of God without provoking envy. And the better you are, the more you will be hated.

The ripest fruit is most pecked by the birds and the blossoms that have been longest on the tree are the most easily blown down by the wind. But fear not. You have nothing to do with what man shall say of you. If God loves you, man will hate you. If God honors you, man will dishonor you. But recollect, could you wear chains for Christ's sake, you should wear the chains of gold in Heaven. Could you have rings of burning iron round your waists, you should have your brow rimmed with gold in glory–for blessed are you when men shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for Christ's name sake. For so persecuted they the Prophets that were before you. The first archers were the archers of envy.

But a worse trial than this was to overtake Him. The archers of TEMPTATION shot at Him. Here I know nothow to express myself. I would that someone more qualified to speak were here, that he might tell you the tale of Joseph's trial and Joseph's triumph. Sold to a master who soon discovered his value, Joseph was made the bailiff of the house and the manager of the household. His wanton mistress fixed her adulterous love on him and he, being continually in her presence, was perpetually, day by day, solicited by her to evil deeds. Constantly did he refuse still enduring a martyrdom at the slow fire of her enticements.

On one eventful day she grasped him, seeking to compel him to crime. But he, like a true hero, as he was, said to her, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Like a wise warrior,

he knew that in such a case fleeing was the better part of valor. He heard a voice in his ears, “Fly, Joseph, fly. There remains no way of victory but flight.” And out he fled, leaving his garment with his adulterous mistress. Oh, I say in all the annals of heroism there is not one that shall surpass this. You know it is

opportunity that makes a man criminal and he had abundant opportunity.

But importunity will drive most men astray. To be haunted day after day by solicitations of the softest kind–to betempted hour by hour–Oh, it needs a strength super angelic, a might more than human, a strength which only God can grant for a young man thus to cleanse his way and take heed thereto according to God’s Word. He might have reasoned within himself, “Should I submit and yield, there lies before me a life of ease and pleasure. I shall be exalted, I shall be rich. She shall prevail over her husband to cover me with honors.

“But should I still adhere to my integrity, I shall be cast into prison, I shall be thrown into the dungeon. There awaits me nothing but shame and disgrace.” Oh, there was a power indeed within that heart of his. There was an inconceivable might, which made him turn away with unutterable disgust, with fear and trembling, while He said, “How can I? How can I–God’s Joseph–how can I–other men might, but how can I do this great wickedness and sin against

God?" Truly the archers sorely grieved him and shot at him. But his bow abode in strength.

Then another host of archers assailed Him–these were the archers of MALICIOUS CALUMNY. Seeing that hewould not yield to temptation, his mistress falsely accused him to her husband and his lord, believing the voice of his wife, cast him into prison. It was a marvelous Providence that he did not put him to death, for Potiphar, his master, was the chief of the executioners. He had only to call in a soldier who would have cut him in pieces on the spot. But he cast him into prison. There was poor Joseph. His character ruined in the eyes of man and very likely looked upon with scorn even in the prison.

Base criminals went away from him as if they thought him viler than themselves, as if they were angels in comparison with him. Oh, it is no easy thing to feel your character gone, to think that you are slandered, that things are said of you that are untrue. Many a man's heart has been broken by this, when nothing else could make him yield. The archers sorely grieved him when he was so maligned–so slandered. O child of God, do you expect to escape these archers? Will you never be slandered? Shall you never be calumniated? It is the lot of God's servants, in proportion to their zeal, to be evilly spoken of.

Remember the noble Whitfield, how he stood and was the butt of all the jeers and scoffs of half an age, while his only answer was a

blameless life?–

"And he who forged and he who threw the dart,

Had each a brother's interest in his heart."

They reviled him and imputed to him crimes that Sodom never knew. So shall it be always with those who preach God's Truth–and all the followers of Christ–they must all expect it. But blessed be God, they have not said worse things of us than they said of our Master. What have they laid to our charge? They may have said, "He is drunken and a winebibber." But they have not said "He has a devil." They have accused us of being mad–so was it said of Paul. Oh, holy infatuation, heavenly furor, would that we could bite others until they had the same madness.

We think if to go to Heaven is mad we will not choose to be wise. We see no wisdom in preferring Hell. We can see no great prudence in despising and hating God's Truth. If to serve God is vile, we purpose to be viler still. Ah, Friends, some now present know this verse by heart, "The archers have sorely grieved him, shot at him and hated him." Expect it–do not think it a strange thing–all God's people must have it. There are no royal roads to Heaven–they are paths of trial and trouble–the archers will shoot at you as long as you are on this side the flood.

II. We have seen these archers shoot their flights of arrows. We will now go up the hill a little, behind a rock, to look at the SHIELDED WARRIOR and see how his courage is while the

archers have sorely grieved him. What is he doing? “His bow abides in strength.” Let us picture God’s favorite. The archers are down below. There is a parapet of rock before him. Now and then he looks over it to see what the archers are about, but generally he keeps behind. In heavenly security he is set upon a rock, careless of all below. Let us follow the track of the wild goat. And behold the warrior in his fastness.

First, we notice that he has a bow himself, for we read that, “ his bow abode in strength.” He could have retaliated ifhe pleased, but he was very quiet and would not combat with them. Had he pleased, he might have drawn his bow with all his strength and sent his weapon to their hearts with far greater precision than they had ever done to him. But mark the warrior’s quietness. There he rests, stretching his mighty limbs–his bow abode in strength. He seemed to say, “Rage on, yes, let your arrows spend themselves, empty your quivers on me, let your bow-strings be worn out and let the wood be broken with its constant bending–here am I, stretching myself in safe repose.

“My bow abides in strength. I have other work to do besides shooting at you. My arrows are against yon foes of God, the enemies of the Most High. I cannot waste an arrow on such pitiful sparrows as you are. You are birds beneath my noble shot. I would not waste an arrow on you.” Thus he remains behind the rock and despises them all. His bow abides in strength.

Mark well his quietness. His bow “abides.” It is not rattling, it is not always moving, but it abides, it is quite still.He takes no notice of the attack. The archers sorely grieved Joseph but his bow was not turned against them–it abode in strength. He turned not his bow on them. He rested while they raged. Does the moon stay herself to lecture every dog that bays her? Does the lion turn aside to rend each cur that barks at him? Do the stars cease to shine because the nightingales reprove them for their dimness?

Does the sun stop in its course because of the officious cloud which veils it? Or does the river stay because the willow dips its leaves into its waters? Ah, no. God’s universe moves on and if men will oppose it, it heeds them not. It is as God has made it. It is working together for good and it shall not be stayed by the censure, nor moved on by the praise of man. Let your bows, my Brethren, abide. Do not be in a hurry to set yourselves right. God will take care of you. Leave yourselves alone. Only be very valiant for the Lord God of Israel–be steadfast in the Truth of Jesus and your bow shall abide.

But we must not forget the next word. “His bow abode IN STRENGTH.” Though his bow was quiet, it was not because it was broken. Joseph’s bow was like that of William the Conqueror–no man could bend it but Joseph himself. It abode “in strength.” I see the warrior bending his bow–how with his mighty arms he pulls it down and draws the string to make it ready. His bow abode in

strength. It did not snap, it did not start aside. His chastity was his bow and he did not lose that–his faith was his bow and that did not yield, it did not break. His courage was his bow and that did not fail him.

His character, his honesty was his bow. Nor did he cast it away. Some men are so very particular about reputation. They think, "surely, surely, surely they shall lose their characters." Well, well, if we do not lose them through our own fault, we never need care about anybody else. You know there is not a man that stands at all prominent but what any fool in the world can set afloat some bad tale against him. It is a great deal easier to set a story afloat than to stop it. If you want truth to go round the world you must hire an express train to pull it. But if you want a lie to go round the world, it will fly. It is as light as a feather and a breath will carry it.

It is well said in the old proverb, "A lie will go round the world while truth is pulling its boots on." Nevertheless, it does not injure us. For if light as a feather it travels so fast, its effect is just about as tremendous as the effect of down, when it is blown against the walls of a castle–it produces no damage whatever, on account of its lightness and littleness. Fear not, Christian! Let slander fly, let envy send forth its forked tongue, let it hiss at you–your bow shall abide in strength.

Oh, shielded warrior, remain quiet, fear no ill. But, like the eagle in its lofty nest, look down upon the fowlers in the plain–turn your

bold eye upon them and say–"Shoot you may, but your shots will not reach half way to the pinnacle where I stand. Waste your powder upon me if you will. I am beyond your reach." Then clap your wings, mount to Heaven and there laugh them to scorn, for you have made your refuge God and shall find a most secure abode.

III. The third thing in our text is the SECRET STRENGTH. "The arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." First, notice concerning his strength, that it was real strength. It says, "the arms of hishands," not his hands only. You know some people can do a great deal with their hands, but then it is often fictitious power–there is no might in the arm–there are no muscles. But of Joseph it is said, "the arms of his hands were madestrong." It was real potency, true muscle, real sinew, real nerve. It was not simply slight of hand–the power of moving his fingers very swiftly–but the

arms of his hands were made strong.

Now, that strength which God gives to His Josephs, is real strength. It is not a boasted valor, a fiction, a thing of which men talk, an airy dream, an insubstantial unreality, but it is real strength. I should not like to have a combat with one of God's Josephs. I should think their blows very heavy. I fear a Christian's strokes more than any other man's, for he has bone and sinew and smites hard. Let the foes of the Church expect a hard struggle if they

attack an heir of life. Mightier than giants are men of the race of Heaven. Should they once arouse themselves to battle, they could laugh at the spear and the coat of mail. But they are a patient generation, enduring ills without resenting them, suffering scorn without reviling the scoffer. Their triumph is to come when their enemies shall receive the vengeance due. Then shall it be seen by an assembled world that the “little flock” were men of high estate and the “offscouring of all things” were verily men of real strength and dignity.

Even though the world perceive it not, the favored Joseph has real strength, not in his hands only, but in his arms–real might, real power. O you foes of God, you think God’s people are despicable and powerless, but know that they have true strength from the omnipotence of their Father, a might substantial and Divine. Your own shall melt away and droop and die, like the snow upon the low mountain’s top, when the sun shines upon it, it melts into water. But our vigor shall abide like the snow on the summit of the Alps, undiminished for ages. It is real strength.

Then observe that the strength of God’s Joseph is Divine strength. His arms were made strong by God. Why does oneof God’s ministers preach the Gospel powerfully? Because God gives him assistance. Why does Joseph stand against temptation? Because God gives him aid. The strength of a Christian is Divine strength. My Brethren, I am more and more persuaded every day that the

sinner has no power of himself, except that which is given him from above. I know that if I were to stand with my foot upon the golden threshold of Heaven's portal, if I could put this thumb upon the latch–I could not open that door, after having gone so far towards Heaven–unless I had still supernatural power communicated to me in that moment.

If I had a stone to lift, to work my own salvation–without God's help to do that, I must be lost–even though it were so little. There is nothing that we can do without the power of God. All true strength is Divine. As the light comes from the sun, as the shower from Heaven, so does spiritual strength come from the Father of lights, with whom there is neither variableness nor shadow of a turning.

Again–I would have you notice in the text in what a blessedly familiar way God gives this strength to Joseph. Itsays, "the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." Thus it represents God as putting His hands on Joseph's hands–placing His arms on Joseph's arms. In old times, when every boy had to be trained up to archery, if his father were worth so many pounds a year, you might see the father putting his hands on his boy's hands and pulling the bow for him, saying, "there, my son, in this manner draw the bow."

So the text represents God as putting His hand on the hand of Joseph and laying His broad arm along the arm of His chosen child that he might be made strong. Like as a father teaches his children,

so the Lord teaches them that fear Him. He puts His arms upon them. As Elijah laid with his mouth upon the child's mouth, with his hand upon the child's hand, with his foot upon the child's foot, so does God put His mouth to His children's mouth, His hand on His minister's hand, His foot to His people's foot–and so He makes us strong. Marvelous condescension! You stars of glory, have you ever witnessed such stoops of love? God Almighty, Eternal, Omnipotent, stoops from His Throne and lays His hand upon the child's hand, stretching His arm upon the arm of Joseph, that he may be made strong!

One more thought and I have done. This strength was Covenant strength, for it is said, "The arms of his hands weremade strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob," Now, wherever you read of the God of Jacob in the Bible, youmay know that that respects God's Covenant with Jacob. Ah, I love to talk about God's Everlasting Covenant. Some of the Arminians cannot bear it but I love a Covenant salvation–a Covenant not made with my fathers, not between me and God–but between Christ and God. Christ made the Covenant to pay a price and God made the Covenant that He should have the people.

Christ has paid the price and ratified the Covenant and I am quite sure that God will fulfill His part of it, by giving every elect vessel of mercy into the hands of Jesus. But, Beloved, all the power, all the grace, all the blessings, all the mercies, all the comforts, all the

things we have, we have through the Covenant. If there were no Covenant–if we could tear the Everlasting Charter up–if the king of Hell could cut it with his knife, as the king of Israel did the roll of Baruch, then we should fail indeed–for we have no strength except that which is promised in the Covenant. Covenant mercies, Covenant grace, Covenant promises, Covenant blessings, Covenant help, Covenant everything–the Christian must receive if he would enter into Heaven.

Now, Christian, the archers have sorely grieved you. But your bow abides in strengthand the arms of your hands are made strong. But do you know, O Believer, that you are like your Master in this?

IV. That is our fourth point–A GLORIOUS PARALLEL. "From thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel." Jesus Christ was served just the same. The Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, passed through similar trials. He was shot at by the archers. He was grieved and wounded, but His bow abode in strength. His arms were made strong by the God of Jacob and now every blessing rests "upon the crown of the head of Him who was separate from His Brethren." I shall not detain you long, but I have a few things to tell you–first about Christ as the Shepherd and then about Christ the Stone.

Christ came into the world as a Shepherd. As soon as He made His appearance, the Scribes and Pharisees said, "Ah, we have been the shepherds until this hour–now we shall be driven from our

honors, we shall lose all our dignity and our authority." Consequently they always shot at Him. As for the people, they were a fickle herd. I believe that many of them respected and admired Christ, though, doubtless, the vast majority hated Him. But wherever He went He was a popular Preacher, the multitude always thronged Him and crowded round Him, crying, "Hosanna."

I think, if you had walked up to the top of that hill of Calvary and asked one of those men who cried out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," "What do you say that for? Is He a bad man?" "No," he would have said, "He went about doing good." "Then why do you say crucify Him?" "Because Rabbi Simeon gave me a shekel to help the clamor." So the multitude were much won by the money and influence of the priests. But they were glad to hear Christ after all. It was the shepherds that hated Him, because He took away their traffic, because He turned the buyers and sellers out of the temple, diminished their dignity and ignored their pretensions. Therefore, they could not endure Him.

But the Shepherd of Israel mounted higher and higher. He gathered His sheep, carried the lambs in His bosom. And He now stands acknowledged as the great Shepherd of the sheep who shall gather them into one flock and lead them to Heaven. Rowland Hill tells a curious tale, in his "Village Dialogues," about a certain Mr. Tiplash, a very fine intellectual preacher, who, in one of his flights of oratory, said, "O Virtue, you are so fair and lovely, if you were to

come down upon earth, all men would love you." He went on with a few more pretty, beautiful things.

Mr. Blunt, an honest preacher, who was in the neighborhood, was asked to preach in the afternoon and he supplemented the worthy gentleman's remarks, by saying, "O Virtue, You did come on earth, in all Your purity and loveliness,but, instead of being beloved and admired, the archers sorely shot at You and grieved You. They took You, Virtue, and hung Your quivering limbs upon a Cross. When You did hang there dying they hissed at You, they mocked You, they scorned You. When You did ask for water they gave You vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. Yes, when You died You had a tomb from charity and that tomb, sealed by enmity and hatred." The Shepherd of Israel was despised. Incarnate Virtue was hated and abhorred. Therefore, fear not Christians, take courage, for if Your Master passed through it, surely you must.

To conclude–the text calls Christ the Stone of Israel. I have heard a story–I cannot tell whether it is true or not–out of some of the Jewish rabbis. It is a tale, concerning the text, "The stone which the builders refused, the same is become the headstone of the corner." It is said that when Solomon's temple was being built, all the stones were brought from the quarry ready cut and fashioned. And there were marked on all the blocks the places where they were to be put. Among the stones was a very curious one. It seemed of no describable shape, it appeared unfit for any portion of the building.

They tried it at this wall, but it would not fit. They tried it in another, but it could not be accommodated. So, vexed and angry, they threw it away.

The temple was so many years building that this stone became covered with moss and grass grew around it. Everybody passing by laughed at the stone. They said Solomon was wise and doubtless all the other stones were right. But as for that block, they might as well send it back to the quarry, for they were quite sure it was meant for nothing. Year after year rolled on and the poor stone was still despised, the builders constantly refused it. The eventful day came when the temple was to be finished and opened and the multitude was as allowed to see the grand sight. The builders said, “where is the topstone? Where is the pinnacle?”

They little thought where the crowning marble was, until someone said, “Perhaps that stone which the builders refused is meant to be the topstone.” They then took it and hoisted it to the top of the house. And as it reached the summit, they found it well adapted to the place. Loud hosannas made the sky ring as the stone which the builders refused thus became the headstone of the corner.

So is it with Christ Jesus. The builders cast Him away. He was a plebeian. He was of poor extraction. He was a man acquainted with sinners who walked in poverty and meanness–hence the worldly-wise despised Him. But when God shall gather together, in one, all

things that are in Heaven and that are in earth, then Christ shall be the glorious consummation of all things–

"Christ reigns in Heaven the topmost stone,

And well deserve the praise."

He shall be exalted. He shall be honored. His name shall endure as long as the sun and all nations shall be blessed in Him. Yes, all generations shall call Him blessed. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307

PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON

TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.

Ge 49:25 • A Boundless Benediction

SERMON 2531

A *Boundless Benediction*

"By the Almighty, who shall bless you with blessings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies under."

Genesis 49:25

You must have noticed, when reading Jacob's prophecies concerning his sons, that the good old man, when he came to talk about Joseph, suddenly seemed to be freer of speech than while he was addressing any of the others. The dying flame of life within him appeared to burn up more brightly at the sight of the son of his old age, the darling of his heart. The blessing which Jacob pronounced upon Joseph was infinite in extent–he seemed to

ransack Heaven and earth in order to express the desire of his soul–and what he knew as a Prophet to be the purpose of God.

It is observable, here, and it is to be noted in a great many other places, that God's richest blessing often falls upon those who have been the most tried. This boundless benediction is to come upon "the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brothers" through their jealousy, ill-will and malice. All this blessing is for the one whom the archers sorely grieved, at whom they shot and whom they desperately wounded. So have you and I observed, Beloved, that as our tribulations abound, so our consolations abound by Christ Jesus. It seems as if it were necessary for a life which is to win the highest blessing, that it should be greatly checkered with affliction. You must go down if you are to rise up! You must carry heavy ballast if you are safely to bear full sails. It has been so, in the experiences of many of us, till we have come to this conclusion–in days of joy we tremble for all the good which the Lord has made to pass before us–but in days of trial we rejoice because we are expectant of a greater weight of glory and of the peaceable fruits of righteousness which will, by-and-by, be ours through our troubles!

I think all of us who are wise would be willing to take the blessing of Joseph. We might not like to be with him as he was despised by his brothers. We might not care to be put into the pit with him. We might not wish to be cast into prison with him. But

we may be well content to take the bitters with the sweets, for, when Joseph came to the sweets, they were exceedingly sweet, indeed!

Remember, too, that Joseph was not only a specimen of a tried saint, but also of a separated saint. There are some of God's people who are so surrounded by adversaries that they have to go to Heaven very much alone. It is preferable to go with Mr. Great-Heart, the women and children and old Father Honest and Mr. Valiant-for-Truth–and all the good company who make up the Church of God on pilgrimage. But sometimes there is a pilgrim who has to pursue his journey all by himself. It is somewhat of a loss for him, for he misses many of the blessings of Christian communion–but God has a way of making up for all His people's losses if they are but faithful to Him. So Joseph, though he had not fellowship with his brothers, found better fellowship in his God and he was greatly the gainer! Am I at this moment addressing a tried child of God who is compelled to pursue his way very much in solitude? Then, I pray you, ask the Lord to give you the blessings of the text–the blessings that shall be over your head. "Blessings of Heaven above." And the blessings that shall be under your feet–"blessings of the deep that lies under."

Moreover, to complete the description of Joseph, I notice that he was not only tried and separated, but he was very severely tempted. I need not do more than just allude to his temptation in the house of

Potiphar. For so young a man, how well he behaved! How gloriously he showed that he truly feared God! And I believe that any of us who are exposed to unusual temptation, if we only have Grace enough to resist it, are on the road to a far larger blessing than the untempted can expect. The Lord tries us in different ways and when we come forth out of the furnace as gold seven times purified, then there is some honorable use to which that gold is to be put! Are you tempted just now, dear Friend? Is it something very pleasant to the flesh, but very deadly to the spirit? Escape for your life and in that act of escape, you will have opened a window through which the sunshine shall come upon you in an altogether unexpected manner! Perhaps not at the moment, for Joseph had to go to prison and to lie there for a long while, but, before long, you shall see that fidelity to conscience and to the Truth of God will certainly bring its own reward. These preliminary remarks are suggested by the surroundings of our text which show that the blessing came upon the tried, the separated and the tempted Joseph.

"I do not understand," says one, "how trials and blessings go together." Perhaps you do not, but there are many old women here who do–and there are many of us whom you would, perhaps, set down as being very ignorant–who perfectly understand it. You see, experience teaches. There are many who will criticize some of the sentences of Ralph Erskine in his Believer's Riddle, and say that these things are contradictory. Just so, but faith has to credit

contradictions.If you do not know that the spiritual life is a profound paradox, you do not know anything at all. The way of a serpent on the rock, or of a ship in the sea, is a mere trifle compared with the way of spiritual life in the soul of man! To understand yourself, you must understand the mystery of the two natures and of the daily inward conflict between them–the carnal mind that never can be reconciled to God and that heavenly mind that cannot sin because it is born of God–both of which co-exist in the Believer. They cause him often to be like Paul, in whom there was the company of two armies, crying, one moment, "O wretched man that I am!" and saying in the same breath, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Please note, next, that God alone is the source of all blessing–"By the Almighty, who shall bless you with blessings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies under." All these are blessings distinctly from God and there is nothing which looks like a blessing which will turn out to be a blessing unless God is recognized in it. If God gives you your wealth, you shall be truly rich–otherwise you shall be one of those poor rich people who enjoy nothing. If God gives you your health and you are grateful for it, you shall have true sanity, for your soul shall be in health even as your body is. Restoration from sickness should always be ascribed to God. Whatever part the physician may play–and he often plays a very important part–yet to God, who gives the physician wisdom and

skill, must the gracious result be ascribed. Whatever may be said to be due to nature–and there is no doubt that a good constitution often works for itself more healing than does the doctor's medicine–yet, since that constitution is the gift of God, He is still to be praised! Every moment we owe the breath in our nostrils to the Lord's kind forbearance. This dust would soon return to its brother dust if God did not animate it by His breath. Therefore He is to be praised for every moment of our life. But when, on certain occasions, disease and pain set in and we are rendered extremely weak–and life, then, more apparently than ever, seems to hang upon a thread–if we are restored, our God deserves, then, a still more special song of thanksgiving. Did not King Hezekiah sing unto the Lord when he had been raised up from sore sickness and his life had been preserved? He did not praise the lump of figs which had been the instrument of relieving him, or sing to the praise of the Prophet Isaiah who had prescribed for him–he praised the God who had healed him and magnified His holy name! Remember, Beloved, that whatever God gives you is a right-handed blessing for which you are to thank Him, and by which you are to serve Him. But also remember that, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." What you get of the devil and what you get of yourself

will prove to be a curse to you–God alone can give you the blessing!

Is it not sweet to think that the Lord is almighty as a blessing God? Jacob says to Joseph, "The Almighty, who shall bless you," and he seems to imply that He will give an almighty blessing! Is it not a glorious thought that God, being infinitely great, does not give as if He were little and that the Infinite does not bless according to the narrow limits of our finite minds? Well may we join with Paul in saying, "Unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Yes, God is almighty to bless us. Oh, happy is that man who has the blessing of the Lord resting upon him!

And, according to the verse in which our text is found, the Lord delights especially to bless the children of His own servants–"Even by the God of your father, who shall help you, and by the Almighty, who shall bless you." Do you not feel that the son of your dearest friend has some kind of claim upon you? If you have long loved the father, you naturally take to the children for his sake. And though Grace does not run in the blood, "For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call," yet the God of Abraham does delight in Isaac, and the God of Isaac delights in Jacob, and the God of Jacob

blesses Joseph, and the God of Joseph blesses Ephraim and Manasseh! God likes to cleave to His old friends, even to a thousand generations of them that love Him! He will never turn aside from those who keep His Covenant. I count it a far greater honor to be descended from the saints of God than to be descended from the greatest princes who ever stirred the history of the world. Will not you, Beloved, pray for your children as your fathers prayed for you? And will not this verse encourage you to expect a great blessing for your Joseph from the God who has dealt so graciously with you? O young man, may the blessing of the God of your father come upon you, even the blessing of "the Almighty, who shall bless you with blessings of Heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies under!"

Notice, once more, before we get into the very heart of the text, that when God is about to bless His people, He can make the causes of disquietude to become the sources of benediction. Men are, by nature, afraid of the heavens–the superstitious dread the signs in the sky and even the bravest spirit is, sometimes, made to tremble when the heavens are ablaze with lightning. And when the pealing thunder seems to make the vast concave of Heaven to shake and to reverberate, who but God can give us the blessings of the upper sky? As for "the deep that lies under," why, in the imagination of some men, it is the world of darkness and the Valley of the Shadow of Death! And when earthquakes happen, as they do

much more often in the East than here, then are men sorely afraid. They know not what lies in the deep caverns beneath them and they tremble, and are dismayed, but God can give us the "blessings of the deep that lies under." He can, in fact, encompass us with blessings so that we shall go forth with joy and be led forth with peace. The mountains and the hills shall break forth before us into singing–and in yon dark forests , the very trees shall clap their hands! Has He not promised that the beasts of the field shall be at peace with us and that the stones of the field shall be in league with us? The stars in their courses fight for the people of God! And the earth below is still moved to its inmost depth by the power of Him that keeps Israel, who does neither slumber nor sleep.

Thus, dear Friends, have I brought you up to the text which I think readily divides itself into two parts and so furnishes us with our themes for meditation–first, the blessings of Heaven above. the blessings of the deepbeneath.

First, there were given to Joseph THE BLESSINGS OF HEAVEN ABOVE. And I believe that they are also given to all God's people who are in trouble, who bear themselves well in temptation and who are sustained by Divine Grace as Joseph was. You and I, as God's people, shall have the blessings of Heaven above.

Joseph had them, first, literally, that is to say, upon his country. There was the blessing of the sun which, in its season, shone to

help vegetation to develop itself, to produce the fruits and to ripen the harvest. There were the blessings of the moon, for, in the darkness of the night men were cheered by it–and the moon has various subtle influences upon plants and people of which we know but little. But, whatever those blessings were, Joseph's land had the blessings of the moon and of the stars. There fell upon his mountains the blessings of the dew which comes at nightfall very heavily in the East–and makes up for the lack of rain. Joseph had the dew and, in due season, Joseph had the rain, too–the early and the latter rains–and the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh rejoiced in possessing a fertile country, a land for which the Lord their God cared very specially. Thus they had, literally, the blessings of Heaven above. And you and I, Beloved, shall have all the blessings of Heaven above, literally, as far as they would be real blessings to us according to that ancient promise, "The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night…The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."

But, just now I am going to show that God's people shall have these blessings metaphorically. That is to say, theyshall have that which is represented by the sun–the sunlight of Divine favor. You shall have fulfilled to you, tried childof God, the benediction of the High Priest, "The Lord bless you, and keep you: the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: the Lord lift up His

Countenance upon you, and give you peace." You shall have as much of the light of God's Countenance as you can bear and, if you will walk with Him, as Joseph did, in all carefulness and uprightness, then you shall have that sunlight continually with you, making glad your heart and ripening within you the fruits of Grace to the glory of God!

Then, when the night comes, you shall have the Word of God shining in your soul, like the moon and, oftentimes, the borrowed and reflected light of the Gospel ministry shall be a blessing to you when, otherwise, you would have been in darkness of spirit. You shall have a blessing by night as well as by day–a blessing on your sleep and on your rest, as well as on your labor! God will never cease to bless out of Heaven those whom He has eternally chosen as His own.

Nor shall you, who are the Lord's people, lack the reviving and refreshing dew. If you live near to God, you shall be able to say with Job, "The dew lay all night upon my branch." Oftentimes, when the threshing floor shall be dry, your fleece shall be wet, for the Lord shall send to you a perpetual watering by the dew of Heaven. Has He not said of His vineyard, "I, the Lord, do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day"? O my Brothers and Sisters, it is, indeed, a great blessing when your soul is full of the heavenly dew–the unction of the Holy

One–the bedewing of the Holy Spirit! This blessing is also intended for all the people of God.

And you shall have the rain, too, in its own season, for the value of the blessings of Heaven is very much dependent upon the season in which they come. Sometimes it is good for us to be surrounded with a damp atmosphere and dark clouds, but there are times when the plants must have sunlight. And there are seasons when the soul must have delight in its God. You shall have the dampness when you need it and you shall have the brightness when you can bear it. The Lord will give you, just as He gives a land when He means to bless it, the early rain in its season and the latter rain in its season–the dew in its night and the sunlight in its day. Oh, be glad, dear Friend, that all that the high peaks of Bashan and the hills of Ephraim ever possessed shall be yours spiritually and you shall bring forth abundant fruit to the glory ofGod!

Now, for a minute or two, let me show you that this blessing of Heaven above may be looked at as being similar to the

blessing The blessings of Heaven, both naturally and spiritually, come to men sovereignly. If we summoned a Parliament, they might talk as much folly as they usually do, but they could not produce a shower of rain by all their talk! If we had all the kings and queens in the world gathered together, they could not give the farmer one sunshiny day when God willed to cover the sky with clouds! He gives dew, or rain, or sunlight according as He wills it.

Well, so is it with the Grace of God in all its various forms! It is the Sovereign gift of Heaven and the Lord holds in His own hand the prerogative to give it or to withhold it–

"When He shuts up in fell despair,
Who can remove the iron bar?"

And when He gives light and liberty, who is there that can darken the child of God, or thrust him into the dungeon? It is God who gives the rain, the dew and the sunlight–and it is He, also, who alone can give Divine Grace.

But these blessings of Heaven are effectual as well as Sovereign. When God makes it rain in the East, it rains and nobody has to go outside to see whether it is raining or not. And when the sun shines in the East, it is hot and nobody has to question whether the sun is shining or not. It so shines that you need to get under the shadow of a great rock in a weary land and, in like manner, I know that when God blesses His people, they are blessed! If His Grace descends, He gives a plentiful shower whereby He does refresh His inheritance when it is weary! When His dews fall, they saturate our fleece till we could wring out the water as Gideon did! The Lord never fails to complete all the processes He intends at the various seasons! Who can stand before His cold, or before His heat? So is it with His Grace–it is effectual in accomplishing the purposes of the Most High.

But the blessings of Heaven are also exceedingly pure. What can there be whiter than snow that drops from the sky? What can there be purer than the mountain spring? It is almost too pure for man's sinful palate, but everything that God sends from Heaven is, like Himself, pure and clean. So is His Grace. When it comes into the heart, it is a lovely thing, a thing of good repute and it makes us, also, to be of good repute when we yield to its power.

And what a sublime thing is that which comes from Heaven! You know how God said to Job, "Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew?" He seemed to ask where else they could come from but from Him–and certainly He it is who bestows His Grace, whatever shape it may take! Every drop of Grace that comes into the soul of a man glorifies the God who sent it, so that the gifts of God's Grace are included in the blessings of Heaven above.

The blessings of Heaven above are also continuous, for, if it does not always rain, then the sunlight takes up its work, or the moon operates upon the earth. But there is always some blessing coming from the sky towards man. The world is never cut asunder from its moorings amid the stars–they all have their ordained influences upon us and, in like manner–no child of God is ever beyond the reach of the sweet influences of the Pleiades of the promises! And God, the great Father of Lights, is always affecting for good the

hearts of all His people. Continuous are the blessings which come from Heaven!

So, you see, there is a similarity between the benedictions of Grace and the blessings of Nature.

And, dear Friends, I think that there is a specialty about some blessings which proves that they have come fromabove more distinctly than any others. For instance, that first Grace which works in the heart–is not that just like the rain which comes when nobody is looking for it? The man has never prayed for Grace or, even if he has prayed for it, there is no true prayer ever offered until first of all Grace has come to produce that prayer. The sinner is never beforehand with God. If you begin to pray at this moment, it is because God's Grace has begun to work upon your heart so that you can pray. He is always first! That is one of the blessings of Heaven, then–that first movement of the EternalSpirit upon the dead, chaotic heart–producing light and order. That is surely from Heaven and God has given it to His people.

And do you not see how clearly Grace comes from Heaven because it keeps on coming even when it is not fed by us? Though we often flag in our spiritual experience, the great God never flags. "If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself." Often, when our heart's fire would go out, His flaming love burns so continually that the fire within us is kept alive. Because He perseveres in love, we persevere in Grace. If God

changed in His thoughts toward us, we would be utterly cast away, but He does not change and, therefore, we are not consumed. This is another proof that the gift of His Grace is purely and clearly out of Heaven–Heaven's own benison, the blessing of Heaven above.

I can look back upon many mercies which I have received which do not appear to have come to me by any channel except through the blessed Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean not by any human channel. Oftentimes, when we are alone, sweet thoughts refresh us and comforts come flying into our spirit–singing like the birds which are all alive at springtime. We know not how those sweet songsters came, but we hear them singing! Those are, indeed, blessings from Heaven above that never touch the earth, but come directly from God to your heart. Perhaps you will have more of them soon, in times of greater trouble and direr sickness and, as you get nearer to the Hill Country, when there is only the narrow river between you and the golden shore, then shall you have more and more of the blessings of Heaven above. They are all yours, but they shall come to you in their season.

Finally, under this head, I may say that we actually and certainly have the blessings of Heaven above. Why, Beloved,all that there is in Heaven is given to us! There is God the Father in Heaven, and He is our Father. "The blessings of Heaven above" must include the blessing of Him who has begotten us, again, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! Our dear Father's

own benediction comes to us warm out of His infinite heart–the heart that gave us Jesus and now can deny us nothing. Oh, what a blessing we have in that love of our Father in Heaven! But Jesus is there, too–

"He who on earth as Man was known,
And bore our sins and pains,
Now seated on the eternal Throne,
The God of Glory reigns"

and all the blessing there is in Him comes streaming down to His people!

There is not one of the children of God who has any idea of a thousandth part of the blessing that he is continually receiving from the Lord Jesus Christ. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell" and of His fullness we are daily receiving, Grace for Grace. There, also, in Heaven is the blessed Spirit, the Comforter, and He blesses us, for He is here as well as there. He is in us and with us, and abides with us henceforth and forever, to illuminate, to comfort, to direct, to refresh, to sanctify, to make perfect. Every form of His blessing is ours. Then, as you look again up to Heaven, you may rest assured that there is not an angel there but is bound to bless you. When the triune God becomes your God, then for certain all the courtiers of the King's palace are your ministers, "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

Beloved in Christ, what is there in Heaven that is not assured to you by your Covenant-keeping God who is eternal, immutable, full of benediction, infinite, almighty in the love that He has to His children? All this blessedness is yours, whether the sun and the moon shine, or are beclouded! All these blessings are yours even as the dew falls and the rain and the snow come down from Heaven, and return not there. At all seasons the windows of Heaven are open and you have not may have–yes, and shall have–if you have but Grace to open wide your mouth to ask largely–and to receive largelyfrom Him who gives without stint and without upbraiding. Blessed men, blessed women are you who have believed in Christ and have the blessings of Heaven above! I pity any who have not so believed, for the curse–not the blessing–istheirs.

II. Now we must spend a few minutes in considering the second part of our subject, namely, THE BLESSINGS OF THE DEEP BENEATH. These are the blessings which come from God's works–from Nature–from Providence: "blessings of the deep that lies under." Moses called it, "the deep that couches beneath."

This promise may be taken, first, literally, as an allusion to wells and springs. Underneath the earth there are greatreservoirs of water which are constantly being tapped in these days by men who make artesian wells, but, in that country, where they did not know anything about boring artesian wells, they did know that springs often bubble up from the bowels of the earth in very strange places,

sometimes on the very tops of hills! It is a remarkable thing that on the Island of St. Helena, a mere pile of rock which stands up out of the water hundreds of feet above the level of the sea–there are found numerous fountains of water, more than sufficient to supply all the needs of that place. And in all sorts of strange places, where you would not expect to find them, even in deserts, springs come up and create an oasis of green in the midst of the barren sand. So the tribes of Joseph were to have the blessing of springs that bubble up among the valleys, or come leaping down the hills, to make glad the pastures and the fields.

The analogy of that is just this–that all God's people are to have the blessing of the inward design of creation.What is it? Those things which you can see are merely the garments of some great thought of God. The sea, the land, the sky–these are, as it were, the words in which some thought of the Eternal is couched–in part concealed, in part revealed. But the great design of Creation is the Glory of God through the salvation of His redeemed. On the innermost heart of Creation, if you could get at it and could read it with the eyes of God, you would see this inscription, "Made for the accomplishment of the salvation of God's elect and, thereby, for the Glory of God." When He made mankind on earth, multitudinous as the bees that swarm out of their hives, the first thought with God was concerning His own people. The race was to live and exist by His supreme mercy, because of His love to His own people–and

His people are still made to live that they may be the means of blessing others! First, the bread is given to the disciples and then the disciples give it to the multitude. The first thought of God is that His own children shall be blessed. When I gaze upon the sea with its rolling waves, or look upon the plains and the forests, or think of this round world and the myriads of stars, the first thing I am to remember is this–that it is the love of God which has clothed His thought in these marvelous garments! The deep that lies under them all is His love to His people and that you who are His shall enjoy most blessedly.

And, next, this is the secret of Divine Providence. You cannot see the deep that lies under, but you can perceive whatis God's design in Providence. Why these wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines and devastations? The man who can read history aright down to the birth of Christ and, making that the center, will read on to the death of Christ andall the later history. He will begin to understand that all of it is merely the salvation of the chosen people hammered out–either nearer or more remotely–it all tends to that result. The issues of all events turn upon the grand Plan of Redemption! It is so in the great matters of life and it is equally so in the little. Your poverty, your sickness , the death ofone you love–all of that had in it the deep that lies under–promoting the Glory of God and your eternal safety! So, Beloved, the next time you get where you cannot see to the bottom of the clear waters, say to

yourself, “There is a deep that lies under, and that is mine, and I am to have the blessing of it. I cannot see what God means by this experience, but how can such a babe as I am ever hope to understand the Infinite? I was born only yesterday and the Eternal God has lived forever and ever. He must have designs that I cannot grasp. The deep that lies under in Providence is, however, mine.”

God’s servants, in reviewing their lives, must often be startled to notice how, in their ministry, simple matters are proved to be from the Lord though, at the time, they knew it not. Have you never heard the story of the Scottish minister? It is one which is, beyond all question, a pure matter of fact. He went to a certain place to preach and took with him the sermon which he intended to use. He went upstairs to refresh his memory with his manuscript and knelt to pray. And when he had done praying, he could not find the sermon! He was in a great state of anxiety about it, for he could not remember anything else that he could preach except a sermon upon the text, “You shall not kill.” He thought that would be a very odd discourse to deliver when taking an occasional service at a Brother minister’s church–and he did not wish to preach it. It was one of a course of sermons that he had preached to his own people upon the Decalogue but, though it was a sermon apparently quite unfit for the occasion, he could remember no other and he, therefore, preached from the text, “You shall not kill”–a sermon against the crime of murder.

When the service was over, there rushed into the vestry a man, apparently demented. And, shutting fast the door that none might hear, he confessed to the preacher that he had committed a murder which had never been discovered. And he received direction from the minister what to do in order that he might find peace with God. That done, the preacher returned to the bedroom where he had prayed–and the first thing he saw when he entered the room was the sermon that he had intended to preach, lying where he could not help seeing it! Often, we do not perceive what is immediately before our eyes–and this good man had not seen his manuscript, for there was a secret design of Providence to be worked through its loss.

There is also a great deep that lies under, not only in Creation and in Providence, but in the teachings of God in theScriptures. You, dear Friends, who have been lately converted, cannot fully comprehend some of the deeper doctrines of our holy faith. It is a mercy that you need not understand them in order to be saved. If I am very thirsty, I do not require to go down into the heart of the earth to see where all the reservoirs of water are–here is a little spring that is bubbling up and I have only to lie down by it and drink. That is enough for me because it quenches my thirst. Of course, after I have done that, I desire to intermeddle with all knowledge and I would like to go in search of the hidden springs of the great sea of the Truth of God to find out what it is that God

calls His deep things, that I may know all that I can concerning them. But, whatever those deep things are, you who love the Lord and live near to Him have the blessing of those deep doctrines, those vast Truths before which the human mind lies prostrate in adoration. They are all yours–you have the blessings of the deep that lies under!

Whatever God's eternal purpose which is not yet revealed, may be, it is not for you and me to try to clamber up andgaze upon the mysterious volume wherein is written all that shall yet come to pass. But we may be quite sure that there is nothing in that book which is not full of blessing to them that love God and are the called according to His purpose. You can rest content with that! When God is pleased to turn the next leaf of the volume of the future and you hear it rustle, do not be eager to read what the next lines may be. Whether they are of gloom or of joy–stand back and say–

"My God, I would not long to see
My fate with curious eyes,
What gloomy lines are writ for me,
Or what bright scenes may rise."

It is enough for me that my name is in the Book of Life and that, being there, all things must work together for my good! The deep that lies under is mine with all the blessings that are hidden in it.

The more you think on this theme, the more you will see what there is in it, for, after all, there is no dark thing that you can think of but what there is a great deep of blessing underneath it. For instance, what lies under death, itself? Why, resurrection! And Jesus says, “I am the Resurrection and the Life.” But there could not be any resurrection if there were not death, first! And it is not an ill thing that this body should lie in the grave and have fellowship with Christ in death, that it may afterwards have fellowship with Him in His Resurrection! Do not be content with looking at the top of the soil of the Truth of God, but think of the vast deep of Infinite Mercy and Love that lies underneath it!

But what is at the bottom of all? I answer, God Himself. , for “underneath are theeverlasting arms.” God’s Mercy, God’s Love, God’s Grace–this is the deep that lies under everything! This deep is unsearchable. As no man can see the great deep that lies under the earth, so we cannot search out or measure the great deeps of everlasting love. This we know–the great deeps under the world are always there. As they were there in Noah’s day and answered to God’s call and destroyed the earth at His bidding, so they are still there and will be while the earth remains. And there is always, in the heart of God, the immutable deep of Divine Love and faithfulness towards His own Joseph. The deeps are always there and we may always feel sure that those deeps are inexhaustible. The springs that come up from the deep are never dried in summer

and they are never frozen in winter. I know a spring which, within a few yards of its source, produces a river which turns a great mill-wheel within a distance of about the length of this Tabernacle from the place in which it comes out of the earth. It is an extraordinary thing, the force that there is in the deep that lies under–a force that is never exhausted! And such is God's eternal love to His chosen.

The best of all is that this great deep that lies under, though unsearchable, immutable and inexhaustible, is, nevertheless, available! Look, Moses does but smite the Rock and the waters flow out from the great deep that lies under. Goddoes but speak and in the wilderness waters leap up and streams in the desert. When man could not get at the flood underneath, then God made the flood come welling up for man! And now He has taught man to get at it and man sets his boring machinery to work and, if he does but continue long enough, it is very seldom that he does not, at last, tap God's great wine cellar–the best wine that there ever was–which He brews up among the everlasting hills to make drink for His people. And up it comes, always fresh, clear and sweet, as stored away by God, long ago, and now given out at the touch of man's industry. Oh, dear Friends, I wish that some of you would come and drink of the water that is so freely flowing! And those of you who cannot find it, I want you to begin working with that blessed boring-machine of prayer, and to keep on working right down through all the rocks of doubt and fear–boring, and boring, and

boring away till, at last, you come to the Living Water of which you may have enough to drink forever!

At my Nightingale Lane house, I had a well which produced the sweetest water I ever drank. It was 460 feet deep. The man who had it made would have a well sunk only there, so the workmen dug down 100, 200, 300 feet and they quite despaired of finding water. But the owner said, “Keep on working. I will bore to the center of the earth, but I will have the well made, so keep on.” And they did keep on till they reached the enormous depth of 460 feet! Then, one day the workmen came up to dinner and they never went down any more–for while they were away the water burst through! They had left their tools below, but they could never get them up any more, and they are there now.

I know some people who have a very deep experience and, for a long time they keep on boring away through all the mud and slush of their feelings. If this is the case with any of you, I hope that you will get through that experience very soon and that you will come to the Living Water. And when it comes rushing up, you will have to drop your tools and just drink to the full of that which God freely gives to all who ask for it! You have only to ask and receive! God grant that you may do so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Ge 49:33 • Sermons from Saintly Deathbeds

SERMON 0783

S*ermons From Saintly Deathbeds*

"And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people."

Genesis 49:33

JACOB did not yield up the ghost until he had delivered the last sentence of admonition and benediction to his 12 sons. He was immortal till his work was done. So long as God had another sentence to speak by him, death could not paralyze his tongue. Yet, after all, the strong man was bowed down, and he who had journeyed with unwearied foot full many a mile, was now obliged to gather up his feet into the bed to die. His life had been eventful

in the highest degree, but that dread event now came upon him which is common to us all.

He had deceived his blind father in his youth, but no craftiness of Jacob could deceive the grave. He had fled from Esau, his angry brother, but a swifter and surer foot was now in pursuit from which there was no escape. He had slept with a stone for his pillow and had seen Heaven opened, but he was to find that it was only to be entered by the ordinary gate. He had wrestled with the Angel at the brook Jabbok, and he had prevailed–but this time he was to wrestle with an angel against whom there was no prevalence. He had dwelt in Canaan in tents, in the midst of enemies and the Lord had said, "Touch not My anointed, and do My prophets no harm," and therefore he had been secure in the midst of a thousand ills.

But now he must fall by the hand of the last enemy, and feel the great avenger's sword. It was appointed to the Patriarch to die as meaner men must do. From the wording of the text it appears very clearly that Israel did not dispute the irrevocable decree, nor did his soul murmur against it. He had long before learned that few and evil were his days, and now that they came to an end he joyfully accepted their conclusion. He was not like a bull dragged to the slaughter, but he gathered up his feet by a voluntary act of submission, and then, bowing his head, he yielded up the ghost. Like a man weary with a long day's toil, he was glad to rest and therefore most cheerfully he attended to the great Father's

summons, and was peacefully gathered unto his people and his God.

As this is to be our lot by-and-by, we may contemplate in our meditations the departure of this mighty man and ask that our death may be like his, that we, also, may finish our course with joy. May we–

"So live, that when our summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan that moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His place appointed by the just decree,
That you, sustained and soothed, approach your grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
Around him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

It is remarkable, my Brothers and Sisters, that the Holy Spirit has given us very few deathbed scenes in the Book of God. We have very few in the Old Testament, fewer still in the New–and I take it that the reason may be because the Holy Spirit would have us take more account of how we live than how we die–for life is the main business.

He who learns to die daily while he lives will find it no difficulty to breathe out his soul for the last time into the hands of his faithful Creator. If we fight the battle well, we may rest assured of the victory. If, enlisted under the banner of Truth, resting in Jesus Christ, we finish our fight and keep the faith, we need not fear but

that our entering into rest will be a blessed one. Perhaps the Holy Spirit would also show us that it is not so much to our profit to have our feelings harrowed by recitals of dying experiences.

Certain preachers, in their sermons, are very fond of extorting tears from their hearers by dragging before them the hibiting the skeletons of buried relatives. This may be of some use–preachers may have used these scenes to work through the natural affections to something deeper. But this is not the way the Holy Spirit has selected. If the teachers of the Gospel will study the Holy Spirit's model they will learn that we are to strike at conscience rather than at the natural affections, and teach men holy principles rather than remind them of their sorrows.

From the great reticence of the Holy Spirit in this matter, I learn that He would not have us be abundant to superfluity in such things. Moreover, it may be suggested that the Holy Spirit has given us few of these deathbed scenes on paper because, being present with us, He presents them to us frequently in actual flesh and blood, visible to our eyes and audible to our ears. We are to look upon the Presence of the Holy Spirit in the witness of dying men as, in some sense, the continuance of the Holy Spirit's instructive authorship. He has finished yonder Book written with paper and ink, but He is writing fresh stanzas to the glory of God in the deaths of departing saints, who, one by one, are taken from the evil to come singing the Lord's praises as they depart.

If this is not so, at any rate it is true that we have abundant testimonies to the faithfulness of God in the departure of those who, having lived by faith on earth, are now gone to see with their own eyes the King in His beauty, and the land which is very far off. During the past week, as most of you know, God has seen fit to remove from the midst of His Church, a great man and a prince in Israel, a man greatly beloved–one of the excellent of the earth–an amiable, zealous, talented, godly, and valiant man esteemed personally wherever he was known and honored officially wherever his ministry was enjoyed.

Dr. James Hamilton was one of the most fragrant flowers in the Lord's garden of sweet flowers to which the Beloved so often comes to gather lilies. He was not a Boanerges–not after the quality of Knox and Luther–but a Barnabas, a son of consolation, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. He had a singular elegance and refinement of style in which metaphors the most novel and charming abounded, like golden grains in Africa's sunny fountains! In his utterances he gave forth a pleasant sound, as of one that plays well upon a goodly instrument. He was always musical with harmony of poetic illustration, but always musical with the notes of Christ–always sweet with the perfume of the atoning blood. He was a cedar in our Lebanon–bur alas, the axe has laid low his glories.

He was a gem of purest ray serene, but he shines no longer in the coronet of the Church below. He was a nursingfather to full many

of the Lord's little ones, and now we mourn because they lack his help–may they find in God's Spirit an abundant supply of all-sufficient Grace. Well, he is gone from us–and while men are sad, there is joy beyond the skies! The loss of earth is the gain of Heaven, and if the Church has somewhat less below, she has more above. I think I see him at this moment borne upward to his final resting place as a stone squared and polished, to be built in the wall of the Temple of the New Jerusalem! Do you hear the shouts of, "Grace, grace unto it"?

There is a fresh jewel this moment in the Redeemer's crown! Heaven is lustrous with the beauty of another bloodwashed robe! Another voice is added to the everlasting song, another shout to the hallelujahs of those who feast at the eternal banquet! The Church has lost nothing–she has only seen one of her valiant captains pass through the flood to join the triumphal band upon the other side. And as surely as the Church is one, she loses none of her members–as certain as it is the same Church triumphant and militant–so certain is it that Christ loses none of His people, and the Church really none of her strength by death.

The decease of our friend James Hamilton, in connection with another circumstance of a different character which has happened to me this week, led my meditations very much to saintly deathbeds, and I have therefore fastened upon this occasion to talk with God's people concerning their passage out of this world unto

the Father. “ ‘Tis greatly wise,” says the poet, “to talk with our last hours.” Sacred prudence bids us be familiar with the winding-sheet and the grave, which must soon be our most intimate acquaintances. Let us sojourn awhile upon the borders of the land unknown, to be sobered, at least, if not sanctified.

First, let us consider the departure of great saints, and of God’s ministers in particular–what do these teach us? Secondly, the various modes of their departure–what do these teach us, also?

First, THE DEPARTURES OF GOD’S SAINTS, AND ESPECIALLY OF HIS MINISTERS–WHAT ARE THEIR LESSONS? The first that lies upon the surface is this, “Be you also ready, for in such an hour as you think not the Son of Man comes.” When in the forest there is heard the crash of a falling oak, it is a sign that the woodsman is abroad, and every tree in the whole company may tremble lest soon the sharp edge of the axe should find it out. We are all mortal, and the death of one should remind us that death lurks hard by us all.

I trust we do not, by often hearing of death, become callous to it. May we never be like the birds in the steeple which can build their nests when the bells are ringing and sleep quietly when the merry marriage or solemn funeral peals are startling the air. May we regard death as the most solemn of all events and be sobered by its approach. In the old wars of the Danish kings there is a legend that when Harold was contending with his brother Harequin, an arrow

was seen flying in the air, quivering as if it scarcely knew its way, and was searching for its victim. Then all of a sudden it pierced the leader's forehead.

A little imagination may picture us as being in the same position as the Danish lord–the arrow of death is flying for awhile above us, but its descent is sure and its wound is fatal. It ill behooves us to laugh and sport while life hangs on a thread. The sword is out of its scabbard–let us not trifle! It is furbished and the edge sparkles with fearful sharpness–let us prepare ourselves to meet it! He who does not prepare for death is more than an ordinary fool–he is a madman! When the voice of God is calling to us through the departures of others, if we do not listen to the warning we may expect Him to follow the rejected word of counsel with a blow of wrath, for He often strikes down right terribly those who would not listen to His reproving messages.

Be ready, ministers! See to it that your Church is in good order, for the grave shall soon be dug for you! Be ready, parents! See that your children are brought up in the fear of God, for they must soon be orphans! Be ready, men of business, you that are busy in the world! See that your affairs are correct–see that you serve God with all your heart–for the days of your terrestrial service will soon be ended and you will be called to give account for the deeds done in the body, whether they are good or whether they are evil. O may we all prepare for the tribunal of the great King with a care which

shall be rewarded with the commendation, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Secondly, the deaths of righteous men should teach us their value. According to the old saying, we never know the value of things till we lose them. I am sure it is so with holy men. Let me urge young people here to prize their aged godly parents, to treat them kindly, to make their last days happy because they cannot expect to have them long on earth to receive their tokens of affectionate gratitude. Those who have Christian parents little know how great is the privilege they enjoy until they become parents themselves and learn the cares and sorrows of the mother’s office and the father’s state.

Are any of you favored with friends who have given you instruction in the faith, whose goodly words and holy examples have helped you on the way to Heaven? Thank God much for such good company! Be much with them, treasure up the pearls which drop from their lips. They must soon be gone–value them today as you will do when they are departed. Are you privileged with an earnest, faithful, ministry? Do you hear the Gospel lovingly and honestly proclaimed? Then bless God every day of your life for that faithful ministry. All ministry is not such–all people are not in such a case. Be grateful, then, and show your gratitude by giving earnest heed to the things that are spoken, lest by any means you

should let them slip and so should miss the great salvation through lack of earnestness.

I do beseech you, dear Friends, value the Christian ministry! I ask no honor for men, but I do ask honor for the office which Paul said he would magnify. And wherever you see that God has sent an ambassador, and that His ambassador is praying for you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God, turn not away from his entreaties! Close not your ears to his persuasions, but honor the man's office– pay homage to the King who sent him by yielding up your heart in obedience to the Word which is delivered to you.

Furthermore, I think the departures of great saints and those who have been eminent teach us to pray earnestly to God to send us more of such–a lesson which, I am quite certain, needs to be inculcated often. There is sadly little prayer in the Church for the rising ministry. You pray for those who are your pastors, and rightly so. "Brethren, pray for us." You cannot do us a better favor. But there is so little prayer that God would raise up ministers! Know you not that as surely as the blood of Christ bought the redemption of His people, as surely as the resurrection of Christ was for the justification of the saints, so surely the ascension of Christ was for the distribution of ministry among the sons of men?

Know you not the passage, "He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men and He gave [these were the gifts] some, Apostles; and some, prophets; and some,

evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers"? Now, you plead the precious blood when you would obtain pardon. You plead the resurrection and you receive justification. But how seldom do you plead the ascension, so as to obtain a faithful ministry? Parts of Christendom are becoming terribly deficient in ministry. I have been told, and I have read in the literature of America, that in many parts of the United States one-third of the Churches are devoid of pastors. Believers are struggling and striving after ministers but cannot find them. There must have been, in that case, a failure in the prayer, "Lord, send forth laborers into the harvest."

And I should not at all wonder if such a case should happen to England, for I see a dreadful lethargy in the hearts of many of God's people as to the work of praying for preachers and assisting in training them. In olden times, if any men showed the slightest ability in speech, the saints sought such out and tried to instruct them, as Aquila and Priscilla. When they found Apollos, a man eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures, they took him and instructed him further. And Paul, when he saw that Timothy was an apt scholar, instructed him further in the faith. Our blessed Lord not only preached the Gospel, but founded a college in which He had 12 students (and more than that), who constantly went about with Him, learning from His example and ministry how themselves to become teachers of others.

But now, indeed, there are wiseacres who talk about "man-made ministers" and despise all attempts to assist our youth to become qualified in the testimony of the Truth of God. May the Lord teach them reason and give them common sense, but let no Christian give one single particle of heeding to their prattling. Let it be our earnest endeavor, both by prayer and every other means, to seek to obtain from God a succession of earnest, faithful, qualified ministers, for, say what you will, it is upon the ministry that God shall send you that which much of the success of the Church must depend.

Those sects which pretend to do without a special ministry (and it is usually a transparent pretense), may prosper for a little while. Their setting up every disciple to be a teacher suits the natural pride of the human heart and Christian men, being grossly deceived, yield to it for a little while. But I know that not one single one of these communities can endure throughout a generation in vigorous existence. With a spasm of excitement and a flush of zeal, they grow awhile–fattening upon those whom they can decoy from other churches–and then they dwindle away to nothing, or divide into little knots, each one agreed in hating the other most fervently. What is everybody's business is nobody's business, and since there is no man set to see after souls, no man does see after them. And the whole flock becomes scattered for lack of a shepherd, who, in God's hand, might have kept them together.

Faithful servants of the living God, as you prize the Church and its ordinances, strive with God that as He takes one by one of His servants away He would send us others that the Church may never lack her standard-bearers, and the flock of God never be destitute of pastors after God's own heart. Pray seven times each day that God may keep alive the name and glory of Christ in the land by faithful teachers of His Truth!

Yet there is a valuable Truth on the other side. We desire always to look at both sides of a question. The taking away of eminent saints from among us should teach us to depend more upon God, and less upon human instrumentality. I was reading, yesterday, the dying prayer of Oliver Cromwell and one sentence in that man of God's last breaths pleased me exceedingly. It was to this effect, I think. I have copied out the words, "Teach those who look too much on Your instruments to depend more upon Yourself." Brave old Oliver was a man upon whom the whole nation rested. He could say with David, "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it."

In a time of terrible anarchy, when men had become fierce with fanatical prophesies and wild with political passions, Oliver Cromwell's iron hand restored peace and kept a tumultuous land in order. And now, when he would be worst missed and could very ill be spared, he must depart, and this is his prayer–"Teach them to depend less upon Your instrument, and more upon Yourself."

You may have observed that frequently, when a man is in the zenith of his power, and people have said, “That is the man who of all others we could least afford to lose,” that very man has been taken away. That special light has been quenched. That particular pillar has been removed. The Lord would have all the glory given unto His own name. He has said it, said it often in a voice of thunder, but men will not hear it–“All power belongs unto God.” He will honor and bless an instrumentality, for that is His mode of working, but He will not divide the crown with the most honored agency. He will have all the glory redound unto Himself–and by frequently breaking up His battle axes and weapons of war He teaches His Church that He can fight with His own bare arms and win the victory Himself without any instrument of warfare.

Coming back, however, to the old thought–do you not think that the departure of eminent saints should teach each one of us to work with more earnestness and perseverance while we are spared? One soldier less in the battle, my Brethren–then you must fill up the vacancy–you who stand next in the ranks must close up, shoulder to shoulder, that there be no gap. Here is one servant the less in the house–the other servants must do more work. It is but natural for us to argue so, because we wish the Master’s work to be done, and it will not be done without hands. If we do not preach the Gospel, angels will not preach it! If we do not win souls for God, we must not expect cherubim and seraphim to engage in this Divine

employment. Somebody must do it, and, since we would have all done that can be done, you and I must do the more when helpers are removed!

There is one hand less–we must stretch out our hands more often to execute the sacred work. Behold, a reaper falls in the corner of the field and all the harvest must be gathered in before the season is past! Brothers, sharpen your sickles, gather up your strength, toil more hours in the day, throw more strength into your toil–above all, pray for a greater blessing upon what is done! If there is less bread, then we must have a larger benediction to multiply it, to make it sufficient for the tens of thousands! If there are fewer laborers, we must ask the Master to give those laborers more strength, that the work may still be done and nothing be marred for lack of effort.

I wish I had the strength, this morning, mental and physical combined, to urge this upon you as I have strived to urge it upon myself. I have sought before the Lord that He would teach me to live an active, earnest, laborious, heavenly life. Very few of us understand what life is. Baxter at Kidderminster, from morning to night spending and being spent for the Master's service! Whitfield, all over England and America, toiling and laboring without the thought of rest, instant in season and out of season! These are the men we should emulate. But, alas, we do a little and then we fold our hands with ridiculous self-satisfaction. Now and then we

arouse ourselves to something like zeal–and then we fall back into a state of carelessness.

It ought not to be! With diligence and perseverance we ought to live as having death in view and the near approach of the time when the night comes where no man can work. I must leave those lessons with you. I cannot enforce them. Only the Holy Spirit can.

II. Come with me to the second part of my discourse. Much may be learned from the MODES OF DEPARTURE of God's servants. All Believers fall asleep in Jesus and in Him they are all saved. The precious blood has washed them. The hands of Christ keep them. The earnest of the Spirit is with them and the everlasting gates are opened to receive them. But unto them all there is not ministered the same abundant entrance into the kingdom. Neither do all their faces shine with those gleams of glory which rest upon the highly favored.

To some of God's own children the dying bed is a Bochim, a place of weeping. It is melancholy when such is the case, and yet it is often so with those who have been negligent servants. They are saved, but so as by fire–they struggle into the Port of Peace. Their entrance is like that of a weather-beaten vessel which has barely escaped the storm. It enters into harbor leaking so terribly as to be ready to founder–without her cargo–for she has thrown that overboard to escape the waves. Her sails are torn to ribbons, her masts gone by the board, barely able to keep afloat. Thousands

enter into Glory as Paul and his companions in peril landed at Melita–some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. All come safe to land, but it is as it were by the skin of their teeth.

In the dying beds of some Believers that text is sadly illustrated, "If the righteous scarcely are saved." We have known them lying on the brink of eternity, bemoaning themselves after this fashion–"God has forgiven me, but how can I forgive myself? I am saved, but, oh, that I had made a profession of religion more plainly and boldly! Would God that I had not been so slow in serving my Master! I have prayed so little, given so little, done so little. I am a most unprofitable servant. Woe is me, for I have been busy here and there, and have forgotten my life's work. I have made money, but have won no jewels for Christ. I have taken care of my family, but alas, I have done next to nothing for the cause of Christ.

"I shall have no means of serving the cause of God when I enter Heaven. I cannot then succor the poor, feed the hungry, or clothe the naked or send the Gospel to the ignorant. I might have done much when I was in health and strength, but now I can do little or nothing for I am weak and languishing upon this bed. Would to God that my Sabbaths had profited me more, and that I had walked more in nearness to God." Such dolorous heart-breaking confessions have we heard, varied occasionally by the lament, "Would to God I had brought up my children better, for now I am obliged to say with David, 'My house is not so with God,' though I

know that He has made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure."

Many a dying pillow has been wet with the penitential tears of saints who have, then, fully seen their formerly unobserved shortcomings and failures and laxities in the family, in the business, in the Church and in the world. Brethren, it is beautiful to see the repentance of a dying saint–travel far as you may, you will not readily behold a more comely spectacle. I have seen it, and have breathed the prayer, "Lord, give me a humble and contrite spirit, like that which I see before me, and help me now to feel the like brokenness of heart."

Yet at the sight of such instances it has struck me that the fruit, though precious, was scarcely seasonable. It must be acceptable to God for He never rejects repentance anywhere, but yet a brighter state of soul would have glorified Him more in dying moments. We regret to see mourning of soul as the most conspicuous feature in a departing Brother. We desire to see joy and confidence clearly manifested at the last. We are glad to see contrition anywhere because it is evermore a lovely work of the Spirit, but we should have preferred to see it sooner–when regrets would not have been unavailing, when the repentance would have brought forth practical fruit in a change of life.

I say, thank God if there is a deep repentance on the dying bed, but this is not the highest or best thing. To enter into life halt or

maimed is not the grandest or most comely mode of departing out of this life into another. To die in the dark with Jesus is safe, but to have light at the last is better. We remember reading of a popular minister, (and the reading of it has struck through our heart), who, when he was dying, said to those about him, “I die in great bitterness of mind, for I have been one of the most admired trees in God’s vineyard. And yet when I look back upon my past life I fear I have brought forth many blossoms and many leaves, but very little fruit unto God’s glory.”

Ah, it will go hard with us ministers if we have to sorrow thus in our last hours! You Sunday school teachers, and other beloved laborers for Christ–I trust you will not have to cry at the last, “Our harvest is past, and our summer is ended, and none of our children are saved! Oh that we had talked to our boys and girls more solemnly! Oh that we had entreated them with tears to flee from the wrath to come!” I pray God that such may not be your dying lamentations, but that each one of us may live for God at the rate which eternity will justify.

When Zeuxis, the old painter, was taking much pains with his painting–pausing over every tint and touch–they asked him why he worked so carefully. He answered. “I paint for eternity.” So let us take good heed in all that we do for God–not offering to Him that which costs us nothing, nor going out to His service at random–without prayer for His blessing and fitness for His work. Let us

take earnest heed to ourselves that we live for eternity–for so shall we wish to have lived when we come to die.

It has not infrequently occurred that the dying scene has been to the Lord's departing champions a battle, not perhaps by reason of any slips or shortcomings–far from it–for in some cases the conflict appeared to arise by very reason of their valor in the Lord's service. Who among us would assert that Martin Luther failed to live up to the light and knowledge which he had received? So far as he knew the Truth of God, I believe he most diligently followed it. Beyond most men he was true to conscience. He knew comparatively little of the Truth, but what he did know he maintained with all his heart, and soul, and strength. And yet it is exceedingly painful to read the record of Luther's last few days.

Darkness was round about him. Thick clouds and tempest enveloped his soul. At the last the sky cleared, but it is very evident that among all the grim battles in which that mighty German fought and conquered, probably the most tremendous conflict of his life was at its close. Can we not guess the reason? Was it not because the devil knew him to be his worst enemy, then, upon the earth and therefore, hating him with the utmost power of infernal hate, and feeling that this was his last opportunity for assaulting him, he gathered up all his diabolical powers and came in against him like a flood, thinking that maybe he might at the last overcome the stout heart and cow the valiant spirit?

Only by Divine assistance did Luther win the victory, but win it he did! Is this form of departure to be altogether deprecated? I think not. It is to be dreaded in some aspects, though not in others, for is it not a noble thing for the knight of the Cross to die in harness? A blessed thing for the Christian soldier to proceed at once from the battlefield to his eternal rest? The like was the case with John Knox, the Scottish Luther, whose bold spirit feared the face of no man. He was beset with a temptation which seemed a strange one to trouble him, namely, a temptation to self-righteousness. He had always denounced all trust in works and yet that error assaulted him at the last. He had a long and bitter conflict, though it ended in joyful victory.

It has been quaintly said that, "Sometimes God puts His children to bed in the dark." When our heavenly Father sends the rider upon the pale horse to fetch us home from the school of this life's tribulation, he comes riding down the street making such a clangor with his horse hoofs that we are alarmed–until we come to know that he is sent by our Father–and then we are glad. God permits the Jordan to overflow its banks when some of His best children are passing through, for He designs to magnify His Grace in the last trial of their faith, and thus to show to men and angels, and devils who are looking on, how He can triumph in His servants when flesh and heart are failing.

Beloved, I think these instances are rare compared with others which I am now to mention. To many saints their departure has been a peaceful entrance into the fair haven of repose. The very weakest of God's servants have frequently been happiest in their departing moments. John Bunyan observed this fact in the description of Mr. Feeble-Mind's passage of the river, "Here also I took notice of what was very remarkable. The water of that river was lower at this time than ever I saw it in all my life. So he went over at last wet not much above his ankles."

Heaven's mercy tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and gives to babes no battle because they have no strength for it–the lambs calmly rest on the bosom of Jesus and breathe out their lives in the Shepherd's arms. What encouragement this ought to be to you who are the tender ones among us! What cheering tidings for you who are weak in faith! Like Mr. Ready-to-Halt, you shall cry, "Now, I shall have no more need of these crutches, since yonder are chariots and horses for me to ride on."

There died a few weeks ago one who may be known to some of you by name, Mr. James Upton, late pastor of the church in Cotton Street. He was more than 25 years laid aside from the ministry by a most terrible depression of spirit which caused him one long unbroken night of soul. He could not engage in any form of devotional exercise so frightfully was he depressed in spirit–doubtless by some form of mental derangement. But during the last

few hours of his life, when he was speechless and could therefore give no verbal testimony, the gloom which had always been manifested in his countenance was removed and he was evidently, at the last, enjoying profound peace of mind.

If God does not take away melancholy from the Believer till the last, He will at the last. If He suffers His people to live for years in winter, their summer shall begin at the last hour. When the death damp is heaviest, then shall the light burn the brightest, and, as the body decays and weakens, the soul shall arise in her strength! Many of the saints have gone farther than this, for their deathbeds have been pulpits. Not to all of them was it so given, for Mr. Whitfield desired to bear a dying testimony for Christ, but did not do so, somebody remarking to him, "You have borne so many living testimonies to so many thousands that your Master wants no dying testimony of you." If you have read Brainerd's Journal, what wonderful things he speaks of there when all his last thoughts were delightfully fixed upon eternity and the world to come! Thus he wrote in his diary, "Oh, how sweet were the thoughts of death to me at this time! Oh, how I longed to be with Christ, to be employed in the glorious work of angels, and with an angel's freedom, vigor, and delight." At another time he wrote, " 'Tis sweet to me to think of eternity, but oh, what shall I say to the eternity of the wicked? I cannot mention it or think of it! The thought is too dreadful!" His

thoughts, however, were all taken up with the joyful eternity belonging to Believers into which he entered with holy triumph.

Then there was that dear man of God, Mr. Payson. His last expressions were weighty sermons. He says, “I suppose, speaking within bounds, I have suffered 20 times as much as any martyr that was ever burnt at the stake through the painfulness of my disease. And yet, frequently, day after day, my joy in God has so abounded as to render my sufferings not only tolerable but welcome.” When Mr. Matthew Henry was dying, Mr. Illidge came to him and he said, “You have been used to take notice of the sayings of dying men. This is mine, ‘A life spent in the service of God and in communion with Him is the most pleasant life that anyone can live in the world.’ ”

Well spoken! Our pulpits often lack force and power. Men suppose that we speak but out of form and custom, but they do not suspect dying men of hypocrisy, nor think that they are driving a trade and following a profession. Hence the witness of dying saints has often become powerful to those who have stood around their couch. Careless hearts have been impressed. Slumbering consciences have been awakened and children of God quickened to greater diligence by what they have heard!

Brethren, do you never find dying beds to be thrones of judgment? Have you never seen the hoary saint stayed upon the pillows prophesying like a seer concerning the things of this world

and of the world to come? Have you never heard him deliver sentences as weighty as the verdict of a judge? “What?” says he, “What are all these earthly things to me now, now that I am about to leave them? They are all bubbles and emptinesses.” Solomon in his life could not moralize with such force as holy men do in their deaths. And then, as they point the finger to eternity and tell of worlds to come, and of the need of being prepared for the tremendous day of the great assize, they appear as if, clothed in their white raiment, they were performing a rehearsal of the last dread judgment!

Many who care not for the voice of the ministry, nor even for the witness of God’s written Word, have felt the power of the speeches of men standing on the borders of eternity. And, Brethren, to bring this to a close, lest I should weary you, we have known not infrequent cases (no, commonly this is the case), when the dying bed has become a Pisgah, from the top of which the saint has viewed his inheritance while his couch has glowed all of a sudden into the chariot of Amminadab–a flaming chariot such as that in which Elijah was borne away to dwell with God! Saints have frequently been in such triumphant conditions of mind that rapture and ecstasy are the only fit words in which to describe their state. “If this is dying,” said one, “it is worthwhile living for the mere sake of dying!”

Dr. Payson, in his dying hours, wrote to his sister, “Were I to adopt the figurative language of Bunyan, I should date this letter from the land of Beulah of which I have been for some weeks a happy inhabitant. The Celestial City is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me, its odors are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of Death which now appears but as an insignificant stream that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission.

“The Sun of Righteousness has gradually been drawing nearer and nearer, appearing larger and brighter as He approached. And now He fills the whole hemisphere, pouring forth a flood of glory in which I seem to float as an insect in the beams of the sun, exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering, with unutterable wonder, that God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm. A single heart and a single tongue seem altogether inadequate to my needs–I want a whole heart for every separate emotion, and a whole tongue to express that emotion.”

It has been sometimes said these excitements are produced by delirium or caused by drugs, yet there are multitudes of clear cases in which men have had no delirium and have been altogether untouched by drugs. Take the case of Halyburton, who said, “I know that a great deal from a dying man will go for canting and

raving. But I bless God, He has kept the judgment I had, that I have been able to reflect with composure on His dealings with me. I am sober and composed, if ever I was so. You may believe a man venturing on eternity. I have weighed eternity this last night–I have looked on death as stripped of all things pleasant to nature–and under the view of all these, I have found that in the way of God they gave satisfaction–a rational satisfaction that makes me rejoice."

Halyburton, indeed, broke forth into such ecstatic expressions that I fear to quote them, lest I should spoil them! Among his words were these, "If ever I was distinct in my judgment and memory in my life, it is since He laid His hands upon me. My bones are sticking through my skin, and yet all my bones are praising Him. O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory? I am now a witness for Christ, and for the reality of religion. I have peace in the midst of pain! And oh, how much of that I have had for a time past! My peace has been like a river–not a discomposed thought. Strange that this body is going away to corruption, and yet my intellectuals are so lively that I cannot say there is the least alteration, the least decay of judgment or memory. Such are the vigorous acts of my spirit towards God and things that are not seen."

When drawing near his end, one remarked to him, "Blessed are they that die in the Lord." He replied, "When I fall so low that I

cannot speak, I'll show you a sign of triumph if I am able." And when he could no longer speak, he lifted up his hands, clapped them as in token of victory, and in a little while departed to the land where the weary are at rest. Oh, it is grand to die like this! To get Heaven here below in foretastes! To partake of dainty dishes brought from off the tables of immortals! To stay our souls while lingering here! This shall be your portion, and this shall be my portion, if we are faithful unto death, continuing diligent in service.

I have already told you if we believe in Christ, we shall die safely, but we may not necessarily die in this triumph–this blessing is given to those who are faithful, earnest and diligent–a special reward which God reserves to some men who, like Daniel, are greatly beloved, or who, like John, are indulged with special visions of the New Jerusalem before entering upon the scene!

Brethren, as I close my sermon I can but utter the present yearning of my ardent spirit –

"Oh, if my Lord would come and meet.
My soul should stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through death's iron gate,
Nor feel the terrors as she passed."

Ex 1:10-12 • Prosperity Under Persecution

SERMON 0997

P*rosperity Under Persecution*

"Come on let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falls out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land. Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew."

Exodus 1:10-12

THE children of this world are wise in their generation. Their policy may be short-sighted and their stratagems crooked, nevertheless the world admires the wisdom of their counsels, and

makes light of the craftiness of their projects. In their opposition to the Christian Church the men of the world might certainly have been as well able to outwit her by the variety of their maneuvers as to overwhelm her by the force of their numbers were it not that there is an unseen One in her midst who is more than a match for the guile of their hearts and the might of their hosts. Looking back at the early struggles of the Hebrew race to gain a footing among the nations, it is very clear that had the contest been merely between Pharaoh and Israel, the Egyptian king could exercise power and policy enough to defeat the sons of Jacob and reduce them to serfdom.

But when a new name is brought in, and the contest appears to be truly between Pharaoh and Jehovah, the God of Israel, it is quite another matter–and a far different issue may be counted upon. There is One behind the curtain that takes Israel's part. He sees through all Pharaoh's plots. Before his thoughts have ripened into plans they are forestalled. As fast as they are set up, they are upset. For every intrigue there is a reprisal. Thus He takes the wise in their own craftiness. The whole history of the long feud between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent illustrates the subtlety of the serpent's seed, and the simplicity of the woman's seed.

But still more does it bring to light the infinite wisdom of Him who rules the seed of the woman. And who will, in the end, bruise

the serpent's head and give unto His people and the cause they have espoused a complete triumph. Whatever has been done by the enemies in rage or in recklessness, God has always met it calmly and quietly. He has shown Himself ready for every emergency. And He has not only baffled and utterly defeated all the inventions of wicked men, but He has turned their strange devices to good account–for the development of His own sovereign purposes.

He has made His enemies work for Him, aiding the enterprise they eschewed–He has turned their curse into a blessing–He has made evil productive of good–He has extracted sweetness out of their bitter spleen, and distilled healthful medicine out of their deadly animosity. He has His way in the whirlwind–the clouds are the dust of His feet. He does not only meet evil with good, but He takes the evil and subjects it to His own eternal purpose. And from it He brings forth a course of events that results in His own Glory, the benefit of His children, and the fulfillment of their destiny.

Of this general principle we shall now proceed to consider three special illustrations. First, the circumstances of the children of Israel. Secondly, the history of the Church of Christ. Thirdly, the experience of individual Christians.

IN THE CASE OF ISRAEL, it did seem to be a deep-laid plot, very political and crafty, indeed, that as the kings of Egypt, themselves of an alien race, had subdued the Egyptians, they should prevent the other alien race, the Israelites, from conquering

them. Instead of murdering them wholesale, it did seem a wise, though a cruel thing, to make them slaves. To divide them up and down the country. To subject them to toil till their spirits were broken. To appoint them to the most menial work in the land that they might be crushed down and their spirits become so base that they would not dare to rebel.

Thus we may suppose it was hoped that their physical strength would be so relaxed, and their circumstances so reduced, that the clan would soon be insignificant if not utterly extinct. But God met and overruled this policy in various ways. “The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied.” The census proved the error of their calculation. The cause looked likely, but it was not productive of the consequence expected. Had it been another people, the tactics might have been successful. But they were God’s people, endeared to Him by their ancestry, ennobled in His sight by their Covenant destiny and encompassed with His favor as with a shield.

No conspiracy formed against them could thrive. And so it came to pass that like certain herbs which spring up when trod down, or like certain trees that grow taller if loaded with weights, Israel rose superior to all her disadvantages. “The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.” The glory of God shines forth conspicuously in the use to which He turned the persecutions they endured. The severe treatment they had to bear from the enemy

became to them a salutary discipline. This comes of the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.

From that time the children of Israel began to feel a disgust with Egypt. They had settled down very quietly in Goshen and thought that it was their rest. They had imbibed much of the manners and customs of the Egyptians. We have it on record that they worshipped the gods of Egypt. They seemed greatly to have appreciated what they afterwards called the luxuries of the land–the leeks, the garlic, the onions, the melons and the cucumbers. They appear to have been almost naturalized to that country.

They were little better than Egyptians. Perhaps persons traveling, except by certain tones of language and contour of countenance, would scarcely have known but what they were descendants of Ham. But now their masters treat them cruelly and they loathe the Egyptians. They are scattered up and down throughout the land, and Goshen is no longer dear to them. They are treated like strangers, and they feel they are strangers. Now that they hear from morning till night the taskmaster's oaths and the crack of the cruel whips–and are subjected to incessant toil and bondage–they think far less of Egypt than they used to do.

This is what the Lord designed. He never intended that His people, Israel, should be absorbed into any other family. He never meant them to be other than sojourners on that soil. He had some better thing for them than that they should dwell in that land and be

as the heathen were. God was thus answering one purpose. And He did more than this. Now they began to remember, as their bondage waxed more and more severe, the God of their fathers whom they had forgotten.

I have reminded you that they had fallen into the worship of the gods of Egypt. But now they turn with abhorrence from the gods of their oppressors and they think themselves of the Covenant which Jehovah had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob–and they betook themselves to their knees. In secret they utter their groanings before the Most High, and when their taskmasters make them smart, they lift their eyes, suffused with bitter tears, and silently appeal to Heaven, to the God of their fathers, that He would have mercy upon them. They had forgotten to pray until then. The mass of them had been unused to call upon the name of the Lord.

But now the scourge drives them to seek help from above. Their terrors, their pains, their griefs, and their vexations compel them to lift up that cry to Heaven which came into the ears of Jehovah and moved His hands to help them. More than that, remember that it was necessary for this people to be altogether rescued from that land which for many a year had taxed their labor and bounded their enterprise–because it was not the land which had been promised them as an inheritance.

It was God's intention and Covenant purpose to give them the Land of Canaan, a land that flowed with milk and honey. But it is

not very easy to induce a nation, numbering some millions, to leave a country in which they have been born and nourished and found a home. Only some very fearful evil can induce them to expatriate themselves. Had Moses gone to the children of Israel before the time of their bondage, and said, “Up! Get you from here unto the land which the Lord swears that He will give you,” he would have seemed to them as one that mocked–they would have laughed him to scorn.

In order to cut loose the bonds that bound them to Egypt, the sharp knife of affliction must be used. And Pharaoh, though he knew it not, was God’s instrument in weaning them from the Egyptian world, and helping them as His Church to take up their separate place in the wilderness and receive the portion which God had appointed for them. Once more–and here you may see the wisdom of God–the very means which Pharaoh devised for the effectual crushing of the people–the destruction of the male children–became the direct, no, the Divine provision for educating a deliverer for them.

Moses had never been, in all probability, trained in the courts of Pharaoh if he had not been put in the basket of bulrushes on the brink of the Nile. And his mother would certainly never have put him there if there had not been a pitiless edict that the male children should be put to death. Moved by maternal instinct to save her child, and moved by faith in God not to obey the king’s

command, she places her child in the ark. Pharaoh's daughter finds the child, has compassion on it because of its cries, extricates it from peril, loves it fondly, adopts it capriciously, and educates it in the very court of Pharaoh!

That child grows up to be the man who should vex the fields of Zoan–the man of God, who with a high hand and an outstretched arm would lead forth the slaves of Egypt to become a great nation which God should bless. So you see the Lord, in all points, meets Pharaoh and foils him. This Pharaoh was the great representative in those days of the power of evil, and he stands still to the Christian Church as the type of the seed of the serpent. But the Lord withstands him, despoils him of his purpose, and turns all he does to the very highest and best end. Such is the narrative full of instruction, and charged with portent that serves as a type of the Lord's doing when He makes bare His arm for the salvation of His own heritage.

II. Let us now carry the same thought a stage farther and take a brief survey of THE HISTORY OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD. The like means will appear in manifold operation. Men meditate mischief but it miserably miscarries. God grants protection to the persecuted and provides an escape from the most perilous exposure. Full often the dark conspiracy is brought to the direst confusion. No sooner does Christ gather a Church in any place, be

it a renowned empire or a paltry village, than opposition is stirred up.

"If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed," is the first check for the serpent's wiles, the first ray of hope for his helpless victims. And the prediction will continue to be fulfilled till at last, according to the Word of the Lord, the tares are bound in bundles to burn and the wheat is gathered into His garner.

Whenever there has been a great persecution raised against the Christian Church, God has overruled it, as He did in the case of Pharaoh's oppression of the Israelites, by making the aggrieved community more largely to increase. The early persecutions in Judea promoted the spread of the Gospel. After the death of Stephen, the disciples were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles, the result is thus given–"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word."

So, too, when Herod stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church, and killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. What came of it? Why Luke tells us in almost the same words that Moses had used–"The Word of God grew and multiplied." Those terrible and bloody persecutions under the Roman Emperor by no

means stayed the progress of the Gospel–but strangely enough seemed to press forward for the crown of martyrdom. The Church probably never increased at a greater ratio than as when her foes were most fierce to assail and most resolute to destroy her.

It was so in after times. The Reformation in this country and throughout Europe never went on so prosperously as when it was most vigorously opposed. You shall find in any individual Church that wherever evil men have conspired together, and a storm of opposition has burst forth against the saints, the heart of the Lord has been moved with compassion and the hand of the Lord has been raised to succor. We have come to look upon opposition as an omen of good, and persecution for righteousness' sake as a tearful seed-time, quickly to be followed by a harvest of joy!

We have looked on our adversaries, though they seemed like stormy petrels, as being the index of a favorable wind to the good boat of Christ’s Church. Persecution seems to be the wave that, when it leaps up around her, speeds her course. Let the mountains be removed and cast into the midst of the sea. But after long experience of Jehovah’s faithfulness towards His people, we are confident that His Church shall not be moved–in quietude shall she possess her soul. Persecution has evidently aided the increase of the Church by the scattering abroad of earnest teachers. We are very apt to get hived–too many of us together–and our very love of one another renders it difficult to part us and scatter us about.

Persecution, therefore, is permitted to scatter the hive of the Church into various swarms, and each of these swarms begins to make honey. We are all like the salt if we are true Christians, and the proper place for the salt is not massed in a box, but scattered by handfuls over the flesh which it is to preserve. We are of good service when we are kept together in great bands–happy we certainly are in the presence of each other. But we are to separate and scatter–and then we shall conquer as we are scattered abroad.

You remember the days of our Puritan forefathers, when the dominant Church of the day determined to crush out pure evangelism? To what extent did it succeed? Did it destroy their faith and their confidence? No, my Brethren–by driving them out of an apostate Church, and compelling them to take up their stand as separated Believers without the camp, bearing Christ's reproach and Cross–an everlasting testimony for pure Truth was enshrined. Was the crisis prolonged? Were deeds of violence legalized?

By the increasing rigor of such persecution our forefathers were forced to leave their native shores, and they had to pass in the Mayflower, and afterwards in some succeeding vessels, across the blue Atlantic, sadly but surely to found another center for the proclamation of the Gospel. And upon the wide continent of a new world they became the progenitors of another nation holding fast the fundamentals of the faith, and rejoicing in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.

There might have been no Church in the United States if it had not been that our sires were driven to the wilds among the Red Indians, there to establish themselves, and set up a banner for the Truth as it is in Jesus. It will always be so. I could almost wish that in this island–though I dread calamity–I could almost wish, for the Master's honor, that some irresistible impulse should force His disciples to go abroad to the regions beyond our present sphere of life and labor.

I rejoice, though I love not to miss my friends, when I find them led or driven, as it may be, to emigration. Whether it be to Australia, Canada or anywhere else, I trust that if they are living seed they will be as a handful of corn sown in the new land, and the fruit whereof shall shake like Lebanon. Christian men are sometimes called to leave positions of great comfort and to occupy stations of great hardship. They may account it a reverse of fortune, while God designs it as an appointment to special service. If they bear Christ's Gospel with them to a people sitting in darkness, that will be great gain, in the long run, to the Church.

Your being sent to a village, though you like it not, may be a lasting blessing to the hamlet. Your residing among strangers, when you would far rather find a more congenial home among your own kindred, may be for the good of that neighborhood. Who knows? Where should lamps be set up but in dark places? Where should we have a guard for Christ's army but where the enemy is most likely

to make the assault? Be patient, then, my Brethren, amidst the persecutions or trials you may be called upon to bear. And be thankful that they are so often overruled for the growth of the Church, the spread of the Gospel, and the honor of Christ.

Moreover, Beloved, persecution in the Church–even when it does not take the form of burning or imprisonment, but of slander, of cruel mockings, jesting, jeering, and venomous spite–in whatever form it is sent–persecution helps to keep up the separation between the Church and the world. I fear most the rich when they bring gifts. I loathe the world most when it fawns and flatters. When I heard of a lady who had put on Christ by Baptism and that the cold shoulder was given her in all the circles in which she moved–do you think I felt more disposed to console or to congratulate?

It was said that now she had but few invitations to such places and such society as she had previously frequented. But I rejoiced, and thanked God for it! I was glad of it, for I felt she was farther removed from temptation. When I heard of a young man that, after he joined the Church–those in his workshop met him at once with loud laughter and reproached him with bitter scorn–I was thankful, because now he could not take up the same position with themselves. He was a marked man–they who knew him discovered that there was such a thing as Christianity–and such a one as an earnest defender of it!

It is no evil to the Church, depend upon it, to have a great gulf fixed between her and the world. The worst thing that ever could happen for us is when affinities are made between the sons of God and the children of Belial. This brought on the Deluge. And if it could ever be carried out thoroughly again, it would bring on judgments terrible to think of. It is ill for the worldly since, "they that are far from God shall perish." But it is a thousand times worse for the professing when they play foul with their profession–for so it is written, "You have destroyed all them that go a whoring from You."

Summary vengeance is their lot. "Come out from among them, and be you separate, and touch not the unclean thing. And I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters." This is a text that needs to be thundered in trumpet tone. What says the great King unto the spouse? "Forget, also, your own people, and your father's house. So shall the King greatly desire your beauty: for He is your Lord. And worship you Him." "Be not conformed to this world: but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Too much laxness, giving way to the world a friendship foil of fascination brings on leanness of spirit and causes us to be scarcely known as Christians. It weakens our testimony, and in every way promotes Satan's ends. But when persecution breaks forth barriers are set up–distinctive colors are worn, so the two camps are kept in

open hostility. And when brought to battle with each other, the Church is kept pure with bright armor! Victory waits her march, and her champions win their laurels.

Again, persecution in the Christian Church acts like a winnowing fan to the heaps gathered on the threshing floor. In these soft and silken days any man may be a Christian professor. Oftentimes it pays well to make a profession of godliness. Men think the better of you–it brings customers to the shop. No one knows how many conveniences may attach to the profession of religion–but if it is pretense without pretext, everlasting destruction awaits such violation of Truth–for God will surely avenge hypocrisy.

But in days of persecution to profess Christ is very inconvenient. Then to be baptized in water may involve a Baptism of blood. Then for the soul to burn with zeal for Christ would probably be followed with the body being burnt at the stake. Then a word for Jesus would bring a word of conviction from the judge's mouth, and, close at the heels of that word, death. Then they who loved not Christ betake themselves to the other side. The cowards and the spies shrink away. Demas went, and Judas went, and all of that brood to their own company, and then only the true and the brave, the regenerate, the elect of God were left.

They stood fast and firm–all the stronger for losing such ill company. Then in those days the Church was like a heap of golden wheat, all winnowed and clean grain, fit for a burnt offering to the

Most High, to be offered up as a meat offering upon His altar. Her martyrs were among her noble sons and daughters–the very Glory of the Church and of the Lord Jesus Christ! So you see persecution is overruled for this great good. It ought never to be, while there are sinners in this world–it ought never to be that the Christian escapes opposition.

I take it that if a man makes an advance in life and comes to a position of fame, he ought to win it–ought to fight for it. Men ought not to be crowned until first of all they have strived for the mastery. And it should be so in the Church of God that we must fight if we would reign. It should not be that we should think it an easy thing and a light matter to be a follower of Him whose life was sorrow and whose death was the death of the Cross. If we are to be conformed to Him, it cannot be by ease and sloth. Not the downy couch, but the crown of thorns! Not the triumph, but the shame must be the portion of the imitators of the Crucified!

Persecution has a further beneficial use in the Church of God, and it is this. It may be that the members of the Church want it. It is a sorrowful thing that slander should be so often used against God's people. It is a grievous thing that their little faults should be severely criticized and magnified. But, on the whole, it is good and profitable. It is a great blessing to be made to walk carefully. The Roman who professed that he would like to have a window in his

bosom, that everybody might see his heart, would have wished, I should think, before long for a shutter to that window.

Yet it is no slight stimulus to a man's own circumspection for him to know that he is observed by unfriendly eyes. Our life ought to be such as will bear criticism. As Christian men we serve a jealous God, and our works will have to stand the test of fire at the Last Great Day. The wood, the hay, the stubble that we have built will be consumed, and only the gold, the silver, and the precious stones will remain.

Are we, therefore, to be afraid of the ordinary ordeal of human censure and malignity? If we run with the footmen and they weary us, what shall we do when we contend with horses? And if in this land of comparative peace we are weary, what shall we do in the swelling of Jordan? This is the opposition appointed for us. It is through much tribulation we are to inherit the kingdom. And if we are sincere, and honest and true, we shall not flinch at this–we shall feel that God will overrule it for our sanctification by making us take heed unto our ways–because the wicked watch our paths.

And this persecution, dear Brethren, has a further usefulness. Often does it happen that the enmity of the world drives the Christian nearer to his God. How many prayers have been offered up as the result of persecution that would never have been offered otherwise? Heaven, alone, can tell! How many a groan, and sigh, and tear acceptable to God have been forced from true hearts by

their sufferings? God alone knows! Ah, in the soft days, the summer days of peace and prosperity, we are apt to gad abroad after vain delights.

But when the winter comes, with its keen and cutting blast, we hasten to our own abode. We cleave to our own hearth. We love to dwell with our own kindred. Even so, right frequently, with hearts all chill and cheerless, we have sought the House of our Father and our God, drawn near to His altar, and found a refreshment we gladly could wish that we might never leave. Why, oh why, are we so fickle? If we could find succor and solace apart from the Rock, away from the Sun, absent from our Lord–our wayward hearts would do so. But when the waters of affliction have covered all the earth, then we fly back to our Noah, our Ark, and find rest for the soles of our feet.

The friendship of this world is enmity to God. It rivals God's friendship. It deceives and deludes many hearts. But when the world frowns, it is a blessed frown that makes me seek my Savior's smile. Anything that drives me to my knees is good. Anything that makes me trust in the promise and wait only upon God because my expectation is from Him, is healthful to my soul, infuses courage, inspires confidence and invests her with fresh strength. O Brethren, the very Glory of the Church is to live nearer to God. The more she thinks of her great and glorious Head, and the more she leans upon the invisible arm of the Eternal, the more invincible she is!

Persecution, in driving her to her stronghold, is overruled to her help! And yet, further, the dark days of fiendish persecution have witnessed bright deeds of Christian heroism never to be forgotten. How often have the richest and the ripest fruits of the Spirit been put forth by the Lord's people when they have been most grieved and smitten! Then the saints have been like clusters thrown into the winepress. But who shall bring forth the red wine? Whose but the feet of God's enemies shall tread the grapes?

And as with exultation they bruise and trample down, they shall crush nothing in the dust but husks–the living wine shall flow, and God shall receive the whole of it. They work–these foes work–and think that with axes they can break down our carved work and cast fire into the sanctuary of God. But all the while they burn not the true sanctuary–they burn but the base wooden erection with which man has defaced the living temple. Let them burn on–they do no hurt–only good ensues.

If you read "Foxe's Book of Martyrs," or any of the martyrologies of earlier ages, you will find there patience, selfdenial, consecration, confidence in God and all the finer Divine Graces of temper in full bloom, perfuming the air with their fragrance. One is astonished at what our poor, weak humanity has been able to endure for the Truth of God, when strengthened by the Spirit of God. Verily humble, weak, and timid women have shown true mettle, waxing valiant, and cheering on men of muscle and sinew,

whose hearts had grown faint. We could mention the names of many saints, if this were the time, who have endured torment as severe as inquisitors could devise, or relentless executioners could inflict, and yet they have not denied their Lord.

This was the patience of the saints, I think, when the martyrs perished in the Roman Amphitheatre, and the cruel crowd looked down to watch their agonies as their bones were crushed between the jaws of wild beasts. I think angels gathered in tiers, invisible multitudes of them gathered and looked on with eyes of admiration at the spectacle of mortal men ravished with the love of God–waving the banner of immortal Truth–while from frightful wounds and horrid gashes their life-blood streamed.

Oh, what God can do by us when He works in us! Perhaps Heaven itself, except when it gazed upon the Cross, never saw a nobler spectacle than when men and women who bore the Cross of Christ in their hearts, gave themselves up wholly as living sacrifices unto Him. The Church looks fairer and shines brighter when she is in the furnace. The smell of fire does not pass upon her. Her Lord is with her–and if the fire is heated seven times hotter–His Glory is seven times brighter.

Thus, again, the principle of the text is brought out–"the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied." Their enemies try to deal wisely with them to put them down, but their wisdom is folly. God has blessed the Church by her persecution. And do you not

think that persecution and opposition–such little oppositions as we meet with now–little indeed, compared with those of olden times–are permitted for our good as in Israel's case, to make us feel that this is not our rest, and cause us to long for the better land?

Perhaps, dear Christian, if you lived in a Christian household, where all the accustomed order helped your piety, if you were put into the conservatory of a gracious Providence, you might be content to dwell below always. We soon take root in this soil, for we are earthy by nature and we cling to earth–like to its like. But when there comes the jeer, the unkind remark, the cruel innuendo, the bitter sarcasm–then we feel, "This is not my rest. I must seek better company than this, a better land and a better portion than I shall find this side of Jordan."

And then we long for the home-bringing, when the King, the Husband, shall fetch home His spouse, and the marriage shall be consummated in the skies. Oh, how sometimes, when the world has been very very cold you have longed for the warm bosom of your Savior! You would have nestled in the world's bosom if you could, but when she would not receive you but thrust you forth, then you came to your true self and exercised your right senses, and you said, "I will return unto my Husband. It was better with me then, than now."

O that our hearts were always set on Heaven! There is our treasure–there let our hearts be also. There is our Lord and King–to

Him should our hearts fly. There are the best ones of our families, our relations, who are everlastingly our associates–Brothers and Sisters whose brotherhood and sisterhood no death can bring to an end–

"There my best friends my kindred dwell,
There God my Savior reigns."

We ought to long for that land–and I say the whip of persecution is helpful, because it makes us learn that this is the house of bondage–and moves us to long after and seek for the land of liberty–the land of joy.

III. And now I close this address by just very briefly hinting that THIS GREAT GENERAL TRUTH APPLIES TO ALL BELIEVERS. But I will make a practical use of it. Dear Brothers and Sisters, are you passing through great trials? Very well, then, to meet them I pray that God's Grace may give you greater faith. And if your trials increase more and more, so may your strength increase. You will be acting after God's manner, guided by His wisdom if you seek to get more faith out of more trial–for that trial does strengthen faith. Through Divine Grace experience teaches us, and as we make full proof of the faithfulness of God, our courage, once apt to waver, is confirmed.

Do pray the Lord that when the trials multiply He may give you faith to meet them. That out of the eater you may get meat. And out of the strong find strength. So, too, if you know the Truth of God to

be at any time assailed, and your own mind is beset with doubt about any doctrine, always ask God to open that particular Truth to your understanding and endear it to your heart–that by the assaults you are enabled to repel your faith may be the more confirmed. Oh, there is a right way of holding Truth, and there is a tenacious way of grasping it.

I have held doctrines, as it were, in my hands, like a boy's ball that might be thrown away. But it is another thing when the King prints the mark of the doctrine right into your very soul so that you could no more part with it than you could part with life itself. Trials often burn doctrines into us, and heresies and infidelities make the good confession dear in our sight as a prize which we could never part with. Thus opposition to the Truth leads to the multiplication of evidences in its support. And the more we are assailed with the arguments of science, falsely so-called, the firmer we adhere to the oracles of God.

Or it may be, dear Christian worker, that of late you have met with a great many discouragements. You seem to have labored in vain and spent your strength for nothing. Ask then, in prayer, and act accordingly, that the more you are defeated the less you may be disposed to yield. Ask that you may be endowed with fresh energy for the service, and strive with increased assurance for the victory. When you feel, "I am foiled in that point," say, "Nevertheless, I cannot be beaten–I belong to a seed that cannot be vanquished. If I

did not belong to the house of Israel, I might have been destroyed and overcome. But none can stand against the Hebrew race, against true Israelites–they must win the day."

Therefore, settle it in your mind that if you do not win souls one day, you will another. And if you cannot press into your enemies' territory in one part, you will in another. And if he defeats you at any time, then multiply your efforts to do good. Always take revenge on Satan, if he defeats you, by trying to do ten times more good than you did before. It is in some such way that a dear Brother now preaching the Gospel, whom God has blessed with a very considerable measure of success, may trace the opening of his career to a circumstance that occurred to myself.

Sitting in my pulpit one evening, in a country village where I had to preach, my text slipped from my memory, and with the text seemed to go all that I had thought to speak upon. A rare thing to happen to me. But I sat utterly confounded. I could find nothing to say. With strong crying I lifted up my soul to God to pour out again within my soul the Living Water that it might gush forth from me for others.

And I accompanied my prayer with a vow that if Satan's enmity thus had brought me low, I would take so many fresh men whom I might meet with during the week and train them for the ministry–so that with their hands and tongues I would avenge myself on the Philistines. The Brother I have alluded to came to me the next

morning. I accepted him at once as one whom God had sent, and I helped him, and others after him, to prepare for the service, and to go forth in the Savior's name to preach the Gospel of the Grace of God.

Often when we fear we are defeated, we ought to say, "I will do all the more. Instead of dropping from this work, now will I make a general levy and a sacred conscription upon all the powers of my soul. And I will gather up all the strength I ever had in reserve and make, from this moment, a tremendous life-long effort to overcome the powers of darkness, and win for Christ fresh trophies of victory." After this fashion you will have an easier time of it, for if you do more good, the more you are tempted, Satan will not so often tempt you.

When he knows that all the more you are afflicted, so much the more you multiply, very likely he will find it wiser to let you alone, or try you in some other method than that of direct and overt opposition. So whenever you have a trial, take it as a favor! Whenever God holds in one hand the rod of affliction, He has a favor in the other hand. He never strikes a child of His but He has some tender blessing in store. If He visits you with unaccustomed affliction, you will have unusual delight. The Lord will open new windows for you and show His beauty as He shows it not to others. As your tribulations abound, so also shall your consolations abound in Christ Jesus.

In the deeper waters you shall find Him nearer, for He has said, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.” He will be with you always, but He has promised to come to you specially and peculiarly, and, as it were, by appointment, when you are driven out into the wilderness, or harassed by the foe. He comforts those that are cast down. Rejoice, therefore, in your afflictions–if you have faith–believe that they shall be blessed for your good.

What is all this to the unconverted? Ah, Sirs! While the men of God flourish in adversity, the men of this world are ruined by their prosperity. Even the cup of pleasure and sensual enjoyment, of which you delight to drink, has its bitter dregs which you shall be compelled to swallow. Even now all your days are not passed in sunshine. You have your troubles. But you have no God to resort to. You will have many sorer plagues than you have ever yet been visited with. And if you continue in unbelief, you will still have no God to trust in.

Perhaps you go to some friends in any emergency now, but no friend can help you in the dying hour. No brother can go with you through the swellings of Jordan. O friendless One, O Christless Sinner! Do you not want God to be your Helper, and Christ to be your Friend? If you do, then behold the Savior on the Cross. Turn your eyes to Him–penitently trust Him–rely upon Him and He is yours!

And then from now on the Lord of Hosts shall be with you, and God of Jacob shall be your Refuge, and your afflictions shall also work your good. May God bless each one of you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[MR. SPURGEON hopes to be permitted to preach on July 2. He is most thankful to inform all friends that he is better in health, and trusts he may be able again to occupy the pulpit of the Tabernacle from Sunday to Sunday.]

Ex 2:23-25; 3:9 • Israel's Cry and God's Answer

SERMON 2631

I*srael's Cry And God's Answer*

"And it came to pass in process of time that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them…Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me: and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring forth My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

Exodus 2:23-25; 3:9, 10

GOD had chosen the children of Israel, and He had determined to make of them a great nation and a peculiar people to whom He could communicate the Law and the Testimony, that they might keep the heavenly lamp burning until Christ should come. Jacob and his family had gone down into Egypt and, for a long time, they and their descendants were very happy there. The land of Goshen was very fruitful and the Israelites were greatly favored by the Egyptian king. The mass of them, therefore, had little thought of ever leaving that country–they resolved that they would settle there permanently. In fact, though God would not have it so, they became Egyptians as much as they could. They were a part of the Egyptian nation and they began to forget their separate origin. In all probability, if they had been left to themselves, they would have been melted and absorbed into the Egyptian race and lost their identity as God's special people. They were content to be in Egypt and they were quite willing to be "Egyptianized." To a large degree, they began to adopt the superstitions, idolatries and iniquities of Egypt. And these things clung to them, in later years, to such a terrible extent that we can easily imagine that their heart must have turned aside very much towards the sins of Egypt. Yet, all the while, God was resolved to bring them out of that evil connection. They must be a separated people–they could not be Egyptians, nor yet live permanently like Egyptians, for Jehovah

had chosen them for Himself, and He meant to makean abiding difference between Israel and Egypt.

Now see the parallel. God still has a people whom He has chosen to be His own in a very peculiar sense, but they are, at present, mixed up with the world. They are in the world and they are, at least in appearance, of the world. They are asfond of sin and as much slaves to sin as others are. They even love the world and the things of it–and many of them are quite happy where they are. They have no wish whatever to became a part of the separated people, set apart unto the Lord. They would rather remain in the world. But God will bring His redeemed out from the rest of mankind. He that bought them with blood will deliver them by power. Christ did not offer His Atonement in vain, but, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." God will yet call every one of His sons and daughters out of Egypt, even as He called His Firstborn, and He will bring His chosen out of the midst of the people among whom they are sojourning until the time appointed for their emancipation.

The first thing to be done with the Israelites was to cause them to be anxious to come out of Egypt, for it is not God's way to make men His servants, except so far as they willingly yield themselves to Him. He never violates the human will, though He constantly and effectually influences it. Jehovah wants not slaves to grace His throne and, therefore, God would not have the people dragged out

of Egypt, or driven out in fetters, against their own glad consent. He must bring them out in such a way that they would be willing to come out, so that they would march forth with joy and delight, being thoroughly weary and sick of all Egypt and, therefore, rejoicing to get away from it. How was this to be done? It was accomplished by a new king coming up who knew not Joseph and his eminent services. This Pharaoh began to be jealous of the people, fearing that, some day, when Egypt was at war, Israel might turn and side with the Egyptians' enemies. He looked upon the people, therefore, as being a great danger, and determined, if he could, to thin their ranks. Hence, he issued the barbarous edict to slay all the male children and, to effectually break their spirit, he put them to hard labor in making bricks and erecting vast structures, so that the treasure cities of Egypt and, perhaps, some of her huge pyramids were built by the unpaid labors of Israelite slaves. The whip fell often and heavily upon their backs, for they were put under brutal taskmasters who beat them most shamefully. They had no rest. They had to toil on and on and on, and scarcely had bread enough to eat to keep body and soul together. At last, the yoke of bondage became altogether intolerable and then, as we have it in the first part of our text, “The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and

with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them."

I want to use this subject in showing to any here who are in soul-trouble and do not understand why they have such sorrows and distress, that God is seeking to make them sick of the world, sick of sin and, therefore, He is putting them into a condition of spiritual bondage so that they may be willing to come out of Egypt! Yes, that they may, by-and-by, with the utmost joy and gladness, leave the land of their captivity!

The first thing I have to speak about is THE CRY OF MISERY. "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning."

Notice, first, that they began to sigh, and to cry because their time of prosperity had passed. The land of Goshenmight still be very fruitful, but their taskmasters devoured their substance. The country might be fair to look upon, but they had no time to enjoy the prospect. They were worked well-nigh to death and they could no longer get any rest in Egypt. All their prosperity and happiness had departed. Am I addressing any who were once very well content and satisfied to live as ordinary worldlings do? And has everything changed with you? Is there now no joy in what was once such a pleasure to you? Does it seem very dull and dreary if you go where you used to find so much merriment? Those haunts which were

once the scene of your greatest delight–are they now avoided by you because you cannot endure them? Do you now feel that you would gladly give up all those things which once you doted on? I am thankful to hear that it is so, for when God is about to give a man a drink of the cup of salvation, He often first puts his taste right by washing out his mouth with a draught of bitters to take away the flavor of the accursed sweets of sin! I always regard it as a good and hopeful sign when a man becomes tired of the world, altogether weary of its sins, and says, “I find no pleasure in them.” This happens to some while they are still young and their passions are strong–while their substance is undiminished, while their health is vigorous–while their friends are numerous. In the very middle of the day, their sun of enjoyment seems to go down. There is the honey, but it is no longer sweet. There is the wine cup, but it has no further fascination for them. Their joy has departed just when one would have thought that it would have been most abiding with them. Do I speak to any in this condition? If so, I think that I bring a message from the Lord to them!

But, next, the Israelites had not only lost their former prosperity, but they began to feel that they were in bondage.An Israelite in Egypt was at first a gentleman–in fact, a nobleman–for was he not related to the great prime minister, Joseph, who was second only to Pharaoh himself? Every Jew walked through Goshen as an aristocrat, for he was intimately connected with almost the highest

in the realm! But now all that was changed with them and they felt that they were slaves–they were in bitter bondage–they must act and move at the will of others. There were hard laws and regulations made for them and cruel taskmasters to put those laws in action. They must rise, not when they chose, but when they were told to, and they might get to their beds only when they were allowed to do so at the slave driver's will. And they felt that they could not bear it any longer.

This was God's way of bringing them out of bondage, by first making them feel that they were in slavery. Have I any here who realize that they are also in slavery? Am I addressing a man who feels that he is in bondage to evil habits which he cannot break, although he wishes that he could and counts himself degraded by the fact that to will is present with him, but how to perform that which he would, he finds not because he is a slave? His passions rule him. His companions control him. He dares not do what his conscience tells him is right, for there is a fear of somebody or other that makes him into a coward, and so into a slave. I am always glad when the fetters begin to gall. They who are content to be in bondage will never be freed! But when they feel that they cannot and that they will not any longer endure their captivity, then has the hour of freedom struck! It is an untold blessing when the Grace of God makes a man feel that what was once a pleasure has

now become a servitude–and what he formerly found to be liberty has now become utter slavery to him.

The Israelites went further than that. They now felt that their burdens were too heavy to be borne. They had workedand toiled very hard and they had lived through the work, but now they were made to serve with rigor and their bondage was too heavy to be endured. They could not bear it. And it is the same spiritually! As long as a man can carry his sins, he will continue to carry them. And as long as a man can be content with the pleasures of this world, rest assured that he will delight in them. It is a blessed thing when sin becomes an awful load, so that it crushes a man until he seems to sink utterly hopeless beneath it! It is well with him, for now he will welcome the Deliverer. He will be glad of pardon from Him who, alone, can forgive sins. He will rejoice to accept the word of absolution from the lips of the Great High Priest and, therefore, although it is often a sore sorrow, it is also a very great mercy to be made to feel the intolerable load and burden of sin. If I am speaking to any who are in such a condition–and I hope that I am–I congratulate them on what is yet to come to them!

Oh, well do I remember when I was such a slave–when, as I rose in the morning, I resolved to live better than I had previously done, yet, long before noon, I had made a worse mess of the day than ever! Then I thought that, perhaps, by increasing my prayers, or reading more of the Scriptures, I might get ease from my burden.

But I found the more I prayed and the more I read, the heavier my burden became! If I tried to forget my sorrow and so to shake off my gloom, I found that it would not forget me–and I had to cry unto the Lord, with David, “Day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” I remember all that painful time so vividly that I can speak to some of you like an experienced friend who is well acquainted with the dark and stony road on which you are walking. I know all about your painful pathway of grief and I long to help you to get over it quickly, and to come to a better and happier place! But this trial is God’s way of fetching you out of Egypt. He is making the house of bondage too hot for you. He does not mean to let you stay there, so He is permitting all this to come upon you that you may cry unto Him to deliver you! He will bring you forth and you shall march out with joy and gladness, thankful and happy to do what now seems like a hardship and like self-denial to you.

These Israelites also felt one more thing, namely, their powerlessness to escape out of Pharaoh’s hand, and theythought that there was nobody to help them. When the young man of 40, who had been educated in Pharaoh’s court, came forward and was reckoned to be the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. When he came forward like a true hero, he threw in his lot with the despised people and smote one of their adversaries. He thought, perhaps, that it would be the signal for a general revolt and that the banner

of Israel would wave defiantly in the face of Pharaoh and that the people would boldly march to liberty. But they were too enslaved–they had been too long ground down and oppressed to act like that–they had lost all spirit and they did not hope to ever be free! They were a nation of hopeless slaves.

Am I speaking to any here who have lost all heart and hope–who have come to this place of worship with a sort of feeble wish for salvation, but with no expectation of receiving it? Are you so shut up in the prison of sin that you cannot come forth? Are your chains clanking in your ears? Do you feel yourself to be in the low dark dungeon out of which you will never come alive? It is to you I have to say that I bless God that you are where you are! Despair is a blessed preparation for faith in Jesus! The end of the creature is the beginning of the Creator. Your extremity is God's opportunity. Now that you are helpless and hopeless, God will come to your rescue!

You notice that in my text there is a gradation, and such a gradation as some of us have felt in spiritual things. "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage." "Ah, miserable wretch! Woe is me! Alas! Alas!" That is how they sighed when they were at their labor. That is how they sighed when they went home at night, or lay down among the pots by the kiln. And that is how they sighed when they woke up in the morning. When a boy was born, they sighed as they looked at him, for they knew that he must be killed. "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage."

And, then, as their misery grew, a sigh was not enough. “And they cried.” Ah, I cannot imitate the expressive language of their grief. There were often many tears and there was the voice of grief which made itself audible in piercing cries. “O God, how long shall this bondage last?” They sat them down and begged for death–and sought it as if they were seeking for hidden treasure, for the life of a slave in Egypt was intolerable to them. And, often, the sigh and the cry were merged into a groan, for we read, “God heard their groaning.”

Is that how it has been going on with you, my Brother? You used to sigh a good deal. Sometimes people noticed that you were very absent-minded and that you seemed to have some sorrow upon your spirit which you could not express. Now you have gone further than that, for you have begun to cry and in prayer to God, you pour out your very soul! Perhaps–and that is the worst plight of all–you feel that you cannot pray. You do not seem to be able to offer what you regard as a real prayer. You can only weep–yes, and perhaps you cannot even weep–and so you sigh and groan because you cannot pray. You are troubled because you cannot be troubled enough. And that is the worst kind of trouble that there is in the world! There are none so brokenhearted as those that are brokenhearted because they are not brokenhearted! I have reminded you that the Israelites groaned and that “God heard their groaning.” Ah, from the very bottom of their heart came up their

groaning! It was no mere heaving of a sigh. It was no mere utterance of a cry. But all day long it was groaning, groaning, groaning–each breath seemed to be yet another sorrowful groan!

I hope that many of you will find the Savior before you know much about this terrible groaning, but it was not so with me. I became so full of groans that I understood what Job meant when he said, "My soul chooses strangling and death rather than my life." It would be better never to live than to live forever under conviction of sin, for the arrows of God drink up the very fountains of our life, pour fire into the blood and make us feel as if a thousand deaths were preferable to living under an awful sense of God's wrath! Perhaps I am speaking to some who, even when they fall asleep, are startled by dreams concerning the Day of Judgment, the sound of the archangel's trumpet and the setting up of the Great White Throne. And when they wake and go out to their business, they make strange blunders–and all day long they are like men walking as in a dream.

Still, dear Friends, if that is your experience, I am heartily glad of it, for it is to me a sign of better days coming! Looking down upon Egypt, the angels must have been glad when they heard the sighs and cries and groans of Israel. "Why," you ask, "how is that?" Because the angels would say to themselves, "God's greatest difficulty is overcome! He wanted to incline these people to come out of Egypt and now they long to come out–so they will be willing

to accept the leader whom God will send to them and, with music and dancing, they will come forth when Moses brings them out of the iron furnace and the house of bondage." Those of us who were, only a little while ago, in the house of bondage, rejoice that we have been set free from it! And we are praying that you who are still in it and are beginning to feel what a horrible place it is, may not stay there long. May tomorrow's sun not see you there, but may you escape at once from that terrible captivity!

That, then, is the first head–a cry of misery.

II. The second is a very blessed one, THE GOD OF PITY. Let me read part of the text again. "They cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His Covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them."

Here, then, is the poor sinner's hope–not at all in himself, but wholly in God! Note the gradations here with regard to God's pity for these people. First, " their cry came up unto God." When it rose up sharp, shrill and intense, it burstthrough the gates of Heaven and "came up unto God." Not that He does not really hear everything, but, speaking after the manner of men, when it was a mere sigh, it did not reach Him. But when it got to be a cry and deepened into a groan, then it came up before Him and He seemed to stop and say, "What is that? It is the cry of the seed of Abraham in Egypt." Oh,

poor Soul, when your cry comes up from the depths of your very soul, then God will stop and say, "What is that? It is the cry of a man in misery. It is the voice of a soul that is in bondage under sin." "Their cry came up unto God."

Notice, next, for it is a step further–"and God heard their groaning." Do you know what that means? There are some people who seem to hear things, but the sounds pass through their ears and there the matter ends. But if you go to visit a sick woman and you sit down, and she tells you all about her ailments and about her poverty, she is cheered because you listen to her kindly and because you are willing to hear her even if you cannot help her–but it does help her even to tell her sad story. Well now, God heard Israel's crying and groaning. He heard them not merely as men hear a sound and take no notice of it, but He seemed to stand still and listen to the sighs, and groans, and cries of His people. Sinner, tell God your misery even now and He will hear your story! He is willing to listen, even, to that sad and wretched tale of yours about your multiplied transgressions, your hardness of heart, your rejections of Christ. Tell Him all, for He will hear it. Tell him what it is you need–what large mercy–what great forgiveness! Just lay your whole case before Him. Do not hesitate for a single moment! He will hear it, He will be attentive to the voice of your cry. Oh, what comfort there is for you in this Truth of God if you can but grasp it! Dear Christians, pray that some poor sinners may grasp it

even now! Pray that they may lay hold upon the sweet thought that God is hearing the sighs and cries of the penitent souls in our midst!

God's pity went further than that, for we read, next, that having heard their groaning, " God remembered His Covenant." I wish I knew how to preach upon that 24 th verse–"God remembered His Covenant." He looked on the childrenof Israel and He did not remember their sins–their practically becoming Egyptians, their loving Egypt and Egypt'sidols–but He remembered His friend, Abraham. He remembered Isaac. He remembered Jacob whom He loved, and He remembered how He had promised to bless them and to make them a blessing. And not because of any merit in the Israelites, themselves, but for the sake of those whom He had loved and honored, and for the sake of the Covenant which He had made with them, He said, "I will break the power of Pharaoh, and I will bless My people; I will bring them out of bondage, and set them at liberty." Sinner, if God were to look on you to all eternity, He could not see anything in you but what He is bound to punish! But when He looks on His dear Son whom He loves, and remembers how He lived and loved, and bled and died, and made atonement for the guilty. And when He remembers His Covenant with His WellBeloved, He says, "I will bless these people whom I gave unto Him by an Everlasting Covenant. I promised that He would see of the travail of His soul and so He shall. I will break the power of sin

and I will set these captives free to the praise of the glory of My Grace. And they shall be accepted in the Beloved." It is a great blessing that although God cannot see any reason for mercy in us, He can see the best of all reasons for mercy in the Covenant of His Grace and in His dear Son with whom He made it! "God remembered His Covenant." Do not forget it, dear Friends, but think much upon the Covenant ordered in all things and sure, and upon all the blessings that are to come to you through that Covenant.

God did still more for His people. " And God looked upon the children of Israel." He had given them His ear. He hadgiven them His memory. Now He gives them His eyes. He stood still and He looked upon them in pity and in love. And it is further said, "And God had respect unto them." The margin renders it, "God knew them," which is the true meaningof the original. He looked upon a man and He said, "That is one of My children." He looked upon another and He said, "Yes, Egyptian though he is in dress, he is one of my Israelites." He looked upon others and He said, "I know them. I know their sorrows, I know their sins, I know their weaknesses. And I will surely deliver them." Oh, that these lips could utter language in which I might fitly tell you how God looks upon you, my dear brokenhearted fellow sinner–how He looks upon you, my poor troubled Friend who cannot break loose from sin, but feels like a bull in a net and cannot get free from it! I tell

you that He is looking upon you in love and pity and that He knows your condition and is ready to help you! I will close my discourse by telling you what He has done to help you and, oh, may He give you Grace to lay hold of it, that you may find liberty this very hour!

III. The last point is THE INSTRUMENT OF DELIVERANCE.

God's power was quite sufficient to bring the people of Israel out of bondage, but He chose to deliver them by means of human instrumentality. God works for men by men, so He raised up Moses, and it was through Moses that the children of Israel were delivered. Now, for you, dear Captive, God has raised up a Prophet like unto Moses. One who is infinitely greater than Moses has come to deliver you!

First, remember that Jesus, the Savior of men, is a Man like ourselves. This ought to encourage you to come to Him.Full of grief and broken down under a sense of sin, you dare not approach an absolute God–it would not be right that you should attempt to come to Him without a Mediator. But you may come to the one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, for He can fully sympathize with you! He is able to have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way, for He, Himself, in the days of His flesh, was compassed with infirmity. Well did Dr. Watts sing–

"Till God in human flesh I see,

My thoughts no comfort find.

The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind!
My hope, my joy begins!
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His Grace removes my sins!”

Jesus Christ is a Man–therefore come boldly to Him, even as Israel might come to Moses! And Jesus is clothed withDivine authority and powerJesus is actually Divine! Jesus is God! Oh, come, poor trembling Sinner, and trust your case in His hands, because nothing ever fails that He undertakes! He can break the power of the Pharaoh of your sins and set you free! Yes, even now He can bring you forth out of Egypt with the silver and gold of His abounding Grace. Only trust Him and follow Him, and be obedient to His commands, and all will be well with you.

This Moses, being a man, yet clothed with Divine authority, gave himself entirely up to the people. He was such a lover of Israel that he lived entirely for the people and once, you will remember, he even said, as he pleaded for them, “Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin–and if not, blot me, I pray You, out of Your book which You have written.” Our Lord Jesus Christ, whom it is our joy to preach, was really made a curse for us. He actually stood in the sinner’s place and bore the penalty of the sinner’s guilt. Therefore, oh, trust Him! Perhaps I may be the means of leading some poor

sinner to end his delaying and now to commit his spirit into the hand of the faithful Creator and Redeemer who died for him. And, dear Friend, if you will but trust Jesus with yourself, you shall be saved at once! I hope you are willing to come out of Egypt. If you are, you may do so. Christ has broken all the power of sin and He is willing, now, to set you free if you will but trust Him and give yourself up, once and for all, entirely to His power!

Lastly, Moses did bring the people out, every one of them. He left not a little babe in Egypt. No, not so much as a sheep or a goat remained there. He said, "There shall not a hoof be left behind." All that belonged to Israel went marching out when Moses led the way. And God's elect and Christ's redeemed shall all come out of the Egypt of sin. Pharaoh's power–the devil's power–cannot hold the very least of them in captivity! No, not even a bone of one of God's children shall be left in the grasp of death and the devil! They shall die and their bones shall be put into the sepulcher, but not the least atom of one of God's own chosen ones shall be left in the power of death! They shall come again from the hand ofthe enemy.

Yet remember, O you Sinners, that I do not urge you to trust Christ as though He cringed at your feet and could not have honor and glory if you did not welcome Him as your Savior! If you will not come to Him. If you will turn your backs on Him, I shall only say of you, "You believe not because you are not of His sheep, as He said unto you." It is not for Christ's sake, but for your own sake

that I plead with you! Oh, that you would come to Him and trust Him! Weary of self, and weary of sin, and hopeless of self-salvation, come and lay yourselves at Jesus' feet, even at the feet of Him whom God has “exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” He has laid help upon One who is mighty! He has exalted One chosen out of the people! Therefore, come and trust Him even now, and you shall be saved! May God grant repentance and faith to this whole congregation for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Ex 3:6; Heb 11:16 • The Two Pivots

SERMON 2633

T*he Two Pivots*

"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

Exodus 3:6

YOU remember, dear Friends, that Paul is writing to the Hebrews concerning Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and he says, "God is not ashamed to be called their God." Then, when you turn back to our text in Exodus, you find that God was called their God at the burning bush and, oftentimes, on other occasions, He is called the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. We must not forget that at the time when God appeared to Moses, in the desert, in the bush that burned, but was not consumed, the

condition of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was very terrible. They were slaves to the Egyptians. They were an oppressed and downtrodden race. Their male children were taken from them and cast into the river. They were entirely in Pharaoh's hands. They were a degraded people, as all slaves gradually become, and they were unable, of themselves, to rise out of that degradation. Yet, at that very time, God was not ashamed to be called their God! There, with Israel in bondage, Jehovah, whose name is the great I AM–a name which makes all Heaven bright with ineffable Glory–did not disdain to say to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." I do not wonder that the Apostle should note it as a remarkable thing, that He was not ashamed to be called their God!

I have been looking into this text very earnestly and trying to find out exactly what was the meaning of the Holy Spirit in it, and I think I have discovered a clue in two words which it contains. First, "Therefore." " Therefore God isnot ashamed to be called their God"–and next, "for." " For He has prepared for them a city." As a door hangs upontwo hinges, so my golden text turns upon these two pivots–"therefore" and, "for."

I shall ask you to keep your Bibles open at the 11 th of Hebrews, that you may see, first, "THEREFORE." Therefore God is not ashamed to be called the God of His people. Look at the 18 th verse–"These all died in faith, not havingreceived the promises, but

having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" and so on. "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God."

To begin with, then, the Lord was not ashamed to be called His people's God because they had faith in Him. Youread here of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob–and then Paul says, "These all died in faith." If a man believes in God, trusts Him–believes that His promise is true and that He will keep it–believes that God's command is right and, therefore, ought to be obeyed–God is never ashamed to be called that man's God. He is not the God of unbelievers, for they act contrary to His will. They set up their own will in opposition to His–many of them even doubt His existence, they deny His power, they distrust His love–and, therefore, He is not called their God. But when a man comes to trust God and toaccept His Word, from that moment God sees in that man the works of His Grace which are very precious in His eyes, and He is not ashamed to be called that man's God.

Notice that it is said, "These all died in faith," so that they did not believe in God for a little while and then become unbelievers, but, throughout the whole of their lives, from the moment when they were called by God's Grace, they continued to believe Him–they trusted Him till they came to their graves–so that this epitaph is written over the mausoleum where they all lie asleep, "These all

died in faith." Ah, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, it is very easy to say, "I believe," and to get very enthusiastic over the notion that we have believed. But so to believe as to persevere to the end–this is the faith which will save the soul! "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." The faith that many waters cannot drown and the fiercest fires cannot burn–the faith that plods on throughout a long and weary life–the faith that labors on, doing whatever service God appoints it. The faith that waits patiently, expecting the time when every promise of God shall be fulfilled to the letter when its hour has come–that is the faith which, if it is in a man, makes him such a man that God is not ashamed to be called his God! I put it to every one of you, have you a faith that will hold on and hold out–not a faith that starts with a fine spurt, but a faith that runs from the starting place to the goal? Some of you, I know, have believed in God these twenty, thirty, forty, or even fifty years. Just before I came to this service, I stood by the bedside of a dear Brother who is the nearest to Job of any man I ever saw, for he is covered from head to foot with blisters–I might almost say, "wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores"–and yet he is as happy as anyone among us, joyful and cheerful as he talks about the time when he shall be "with Christ, which is far better."

Oh, that is the faith we want! "These all died in faith," "therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God." He is not the God of apostates, for He has said, "If any man draws back, My soul shall

have no pleasure in him." If he has put his hand to the plow and looks back, he is not worthy of the Kingdom of God. It is the man who steadily and perseveringly, resting in his God and believing Him against all that may be said by God's foes, holds on until he sees the King in His beauty in the land which is very far off. Of such a man it may be truly said that God is not ashamed to be called his God!

Now let us come back to the Scripture. We cannot do better than keep close to it, for our text is only to be understood by the context. Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture. The locks of Scripture are only to be opened with the keys of Scripture! There is no lock in the whole Bible which God meant us to open without a key to fit it somewhere in the Bible–and we are to search for it until we find it. Now read on in the 18 th verse, "These all died in faith, not havingreceived the promises." That is to say, the things that God promised them in their mortal life,and they did not always expect that He would do so. They were a waiting people. God loves those who are like Himself. Iam not now speaking of His love of benevolence, for with that love He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, but I am speaking of the love of complacency which makes Him not ashamed to be called our God. In that sense, God loves those who are like Himself–and God is a waiting God–He is never in a hurry. How wondrous is the leisure of the Eternal!

When He is coming to help His people, He is quick, indeed! “He rode upon a cherub, and did fly, yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind.” But, oftentimes, He waits and tarries till some men count it slackness. But He does not reckon time as we do. With God, a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. So, being a waiting God, He loves a waiting people. He loves a man who can take the promise and say, “I believe it. It may never be fulfilled to me in this life, but I do not need that it should be. I am perfectly willing that it should be fulfilled when God intends that it should be.” Abraham saw Christ’s day afar off, but he never saw Christ–yet he rejoiced in the promise of which he did not receive the fulfillment! Isaac did not see Christ except in a vision of the things that were long afterwards to come to pass. Jacob did not hear that joyful sound, which–

“Kings and Prophets waited for,
And sought, but never found.”

But they were perfectly willing to wait and God was not ashamed to be called the God of such a waiting people!

You remember Mr. Bunyan’s description of the two children, Passion and Patience? Passion would have his best things now, and he had them. But he soon spoiled them, misused them and abused them. But Patience would have his best things last and, as Bunyan very prettily says, “There is nothing to come after the last.” Therefore, when Patience got his best things, they lasted on forever

and forever. God, loves not the passion, but He loves the patience. “The husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth and has long patience for it.” And I would gladly imitate him. “My Soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” The worldly man lives in the present, but that is a poor way of living, worthy only of the beasts that perish.

Look on the sheep and bullocks in the pasture–what kind of life is theirs? They also live in the present. If they have grass enough for today, they are perfectly satisfied. The butcher’s knife has no terrors for them and neither do they, in the cold of winter, look forward to the bright days of summer. They cannot look before them and God loves not men who are like the beasts of the field! He is ashamed to be called their God. But He loves the man who gets to live in eternity, for God Himself lives there! To God there is no past, present, or future–He sees all at a single glance. And when a man comes to feel that he is not living simply in today which will so soon end, but that he is living in the eternity which will never end. When he is rejoicing in the Covenant, “ordered in all things, and sure,” made from before the foundation of the world–when a man feels that he is living in the future as well as the present, that his vast estates are on the other side of Jordan, that his chief joy is up there where Christ sits at the right hand of God, and that his own heart has gone up there where his treasure is, for “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”–when the affection is set,

not upon things below, but upon things above–that is the man whom God loves because he has learned how to live in God's atmosphere, in God's own eternity! He has risen above the beggarly elements of time and space. He is not circumscribed by Almanacs, days, months and years–his thoughts range right away from that glorious declaration, "I have loved you with an everlasting love," to those endless, dateless periods when the everlasting love of God will still be the constant delight of His people!

I see, then, why it is written that "God, is not ashamed to be called their God," because they are content to live without having received the promises, but to keep on patiently waiting with a holy, joyful confidence, till the hour of God's gracious purpose shall arrive and the promise shall be fulfilled.

Now read on in the 18 th verse, and see whether this description fits yourself, dear Friend. "But having seen them afaroff." So they were a far-seeing people. God, you know, sees everything. And He loves people who can see afar off. Thegods of the heathen have eyes, but they see not. And the Psalmist says, "They that make them are like unto them." So they that worship a blind god are a blind people! But they that worship a seeing God are, themselves, made to see, for they are numbered with the pure in heart who shall see God! It is a grand thing when a man can see infinitely further than these poor eyes can carry, far beyond the range of the

strongest telescope, when he can see beyond death–and see beyond the Judgment Seat and see right into Heaven and there behold the Lamb leading His glorified flock to the living fountains of waters, and the saints, with tearless eyes, forever bowing before the Throne of God and the Lamb! God is not ashamed to be called the God of the people who can do this! God is ashamed to be called the God of you blind people, whose eyes have never been opened. But when He opens your eyes, then He becomes your God and He is not ashamed to be so called, for He it is that gives us this blessed power to see! Until spiritual sight is thus bestowed upon us, we are blind. But when God has given us sight, then He is not ashamed to acknowledge us as His children, nor is He ashamed to acknowledge that He, Himself, is our God!

I appeal to you whom I am now addressing and ask whether you can see God's promises afar off? There are some who say, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." Yes, it may be so with the poor birds that sing here, but, for my part, I am willing to wait till I can have the one in the bush if it is in the bush that burned with fire because God was there! You may have the bird in the hand, if you will. You will soon pluck off its feathers, it will speedily die in your hand and there will come an end to it. But there are other birds which, as yet, we cannot reach, but which are really ours, and if we cannot at present grasp them, we are willing to wait God's time–because we can see that they will be in our hands in the future, we

can already see them “afar off.” Unhappy is the man who sees nothing but what he calls, “the main chance,” or who sees nothing but that which is within a few feet of him. Wretched, indeed, is he who lives only to get money, or to gain honor–whose whole life is spent in the pursuit of personal comfort, but who never had his eyes opened enough to see the eternal things, and who never was able to set a value upon anything but what could be paid for with pounds, shillings and pence. Beloved, have you seen the promises afar off? Has the Lord opened your eyes to see eternal things? Then it is written concerning you, also, “Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God.”

Now pass on to the next sentence, for every word is fruitful with meaning–“and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.” They were people who rejoiced in things unseen. You will find that, in the Revised Version, the words,“persuaded of them,” are left out, and very properly so, for there is no doubt whatever that they were not in the original, but were added by somebody who wished to explain the meaning to us. The Greek is properly rendered, “but having seen them afar off, greeted them,” but I like, even better, the translation, “embraced them.” It means that as for the things which are promised to us, if we are Believers, like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we have, from afar, seen those promised things and we have welcomed them. Or, to use our Authorized Version, we have “embraced them.” We have pressed them to our bosom, we have

hugged them to our heart, we have loved them in our very soul, we have rejoiced in them! They have filled our spiritual nature full of music and all the bells of our being are ringing merry peals because of the blessed promises of our God. Now, when a man is of that mind, God is not ashamed to be called his God!

Let me ask you then, dear Friend–What is it that you are embracing? Is it some earthly thing? Does your heart love and cling to that which you can see, and touch and handle? Is that your chief delight? Then God is ashamed to be called your God because you are an idolater! You are worshipping some created thing. But if you can say of Christ, "He is all my salvation and all my desire," then God is not ashamed to be called your God. Remember what David said–"Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart," for God is able to give to a man his desires when all his heart is delighting in his God–and God is not ashamed to be called his God. The Lord's love is not set upon merely material objects. The infinite heart of God loves truth, righteousness, purity and everything that is holy and glorious. And if your heart does the same, God is not ashamed to be called your God. But if you do not love these things, you have neither part nor lot in God–you are a stranger to Him and, though I speak this solemn Truth of God in gentle language, I pray that it may drop like lye upon your spirit and burn its way into your very soul! What an awful thing it must be to be without God–to have no part nor lot

in Him–never to be able to say, "My God, my Father," but only to speak of Him as a God–an unknown God, another man's God, but no God to you! May it not be so with you, my Friends! If you can say that you have seen the promises from afar and have, by faith, embraced them, then God is not ashamed to be called your God.

Pass on to the next sentence–"and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." They acknowledged that they were not at home here. Abraham never built a house! Isaac never lived anywhere but in a tent and, though Jacob tried to dwell in a settled habitation, he got into trouble through it and he was bound, still, to be a tentdweller. The reason why they lived in tents was because they wanted to show to all around them that they did not belong to that country. There were great cities with walls which, as men said, reached to Heaven, but they did not go to dwell in those cities. You remember that Lot did, yet he was glad enough to get out again–"saved, yet so as by fire." But Abraham, Isaac and Jacob kept away from other men, for they were commanded to dwell alone and not to be numbered among the nations. Nor were they–they kept themselves apart from other people as strangers and sojourners here below, so, for that very reason, God is not ashamed to be called their God!

Remember how David said to the Lord, "I am a stranger with You, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." That is a very amazing expression–"a stranger with You"–blessed be God, not "a

stranger to withYou." That is to say, God is a stranger here–it is His own world and He made it, but when Christ, who is the Son of God, and the Creator of the world, came into it, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." And they soon made Him feel that the only treatment which He would receive at their hands was this–"This is the Heir. Come, let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours." There was no man who ever lived who was a truer Man than was Christ the Lord. But there was never a Man who was more unlike the rest of men. He was a homely Man, a home-loving Man to the last degree, yet He was never at home. This world was not His rest. He had nowhere to lay His head and what was true, naturally, was also true spiritually. This world offered Christ no rest whatever.

Now, dear Friends, how is it with us? Do we belong to this world, or to the unseen? How do you feel about this matter? Do you feel at home here? I think that we are often compelled to cry with the Psalmist, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" We wish to do good to others as far as we can. We are men of peace, but when we speak, they are for war and we realize the truth of our Lord's words, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." The more a man comes right straight out for God, the more opposition he is sure to meet with! Be half-asleep and nobody will say much against you. But wake up and be active for God and for His Christ and you will soon discover that the seed

of the serpent still has the serpent's venom in it–and it hates the Seed of the woman as much as it ever did! It must be so and, therefore, always feel that you are only a stranger here and that your business is to go through this world as a traveler passes through a foreign country. He does not speak the language of the people. He does not follow their customs. He is not one of the citizens of the land. He is just a temporary dweller here below and he is on his journey home. If that is the kind of man you are, God is not ashamed to be called your God.

But He is not the God of the earthworms that only want to burrow down into the soil. He is not the God of those who build their nests and say, "Here would we live forever." He is not the God of the man who can say, "Give me a knife and fork, and plenty to eat and drink. Give me suitable clothes to wear in the day and a nice soft bed to sleep on at night. Give me wealth, give me fame–that is all I need–and I will let Heaven go to anyone who wants it!" Jehovah is not the God of Esau, who sells his birthright for a mess of pottage, but He is the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob who have a heritage that they cannot see, and who count the land in which they dwell to be a place of strangers and of sojourners–and they think of themselves as only strangers and sojourners in it.

Now read on a little further. "For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." The word translated, "country," might, I think be better rendered, "fatherland." "They who say that

they are strangers here declare plainly that they seek a fatherland." The word is sometimes translated, "their own country." "A Prophet is not without honor, save in his own country." It is the same word here in the Greek. It signifies that they sought their owncountry– their fatherland. Therefore God, who is the Father of all His people, and whose Heaven is their fatherland, is not ashamed to be called their God. Now, dear Friends, are you seeking a fatherland? I put the question to every hearer here–Are you looking for a fatherland? Sir Walter Scott wrote–

"Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself has said,
'This is my own, my native land'?
Whose heart has ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he has turned
From wandering on a foreign strand?"

So said the patriot poet and we have said it, too, for we are patriots! But yet I venture to say that this is not my home, this is not my fatherland–"I'm but a stranger here!Heaven is my home."My fatherland lies out of sight, beyond the everlasting hills, where God dwells and where Christ sits at the right hand of the Father. Now, the men who, by Grace, have been brought to say this, "We are out of our own country, we are seeking a fatherland," these are the people of whom it is written, "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God."

Paul goes on to say, “And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from where they came, they might have had opportunity to have returned.” Brothers and Sisters, this is another characteristic of Believers–we have left the worldas our home, and joy, and comfort, to seek a better country, but we may go back if we like. There is no compulsion to keep a man a Christian but the compulsion of love. He who is enlisted in the army of Christ may desert if he pleases, but the blessed Grace of God will hold us so that we shall do no such thing! We have plenty of opportunities to return. Oh, how many invite us to turn back! I know how they beckon some of you who have lately come out on the Lord’s side. Sometimes it is a female voice that would charm you and there is a great fascination about it, and you have to mind what you are doing lest you become unequally yoked together. Sometimes it is the voice of the world promising you wealth–offering you a better situation, perhaps, if you will go back. But, like Moses, you esteem “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” You have plenty of opportunities to return. There are back entrances to Satan’s Kingdom–he does not require you to come in at the front door–he lets you sneak in, again, by the back gate. If you want to go into slavery, again, there are many opportunities of returning! But if you are made by Christ to be, in this respect, like God, immutable, so that you say, “I cannot turn. I cannot change. I must be what Christ has made me. I must stand fast for truth and

for holiness, and stand fast as long as I live, so help me, my God"– if you are able to talk like that, then God is not ashamed to be called your God! Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you can get back to the old country whenever you like. But they never will go back–the deep dividing river rolls between them and that land, even as, today, there rolls between some of us and the world the stream in which we have been buried with Christ and, by God's Grace, we shall never cross it again! And, because of that holy determination, God is not ashamed to be called our God.

I finish up my remarks upon the word, "therefore," which is very full of matter, by noticing how the Apostle says, "But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly." That is to say, instead of going back, we are pressing forwardtowards heavenly things. "God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." "The Father seeks such to worship Him." That is, those who are spiritual, who are seeking after heavenly things with all theirheart. These are they whom God loves, for God is spiritual. God is heavenly and when He has made us spiritual and made us pant after heavenly things, then He is not ashamed to be called our God.

I have put these points before you as briefly as I could, wishing every moment to be examining myself, and asking you to examine yourselves. Have you a life within you which makes you pant and pine after heavenly things? Whatever you have in this world, do

you hold it with a loose hand? Do you feel that it is not your real riches–it is not your true treasure? You know that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were all rich men. God blessed them and gave them a great increase to all that they had, but, still, they did not live simply to gather riches! They did not make that their chief delight. If you had asked them, they would have told you that they were inheritors of a mysterious Covenant by which God had bound Himself to be their God, and the God of their seed. And in that Covenant was included the promise that Christ Himself should come out of their loins–and for Him they waited–He was the hope of their spirit. Now, dear Friends, if that is the case with you, also, you can understand the meaning of my text, "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God."

II. I must give but a few minutes to the second part of the text, yet it needs a good deal of thought, for it says, "for He has prepared a city for them." The second pivot word is, "for."

Now go back again to the text in Exodus, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Yet Paul says, "These all died," and we know that our Lord said to the Sadducees, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Is He not ashamed to be called the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, seeing that they all died? No, because they are not dead, though they died, "for He has prepared for them a city." These men, though they lived and died,and passed out of the world without

having received the heritage, are not dead! There is the glory of the matter. When they lay a-dying, the devil might have come and said to them, "Now, what have you got by your Covenant with God? You left father, mother and everything that you had, and went and lived the separated life–and now you are dying out here–what have you got? Nothing but some little holes in the Cave of Machpelah into which they will push your bodies! That is all that you have!"

Oh, but the devil does not know! Or if he does, he is a liar, for they gained everything by that life of faith, for theystill live and God has prepared a city for them. And now they have entered that city! Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are at the very head of the celestial company, for our Lord said, "Many shall come from the east, and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven." And, by-and-by, Machpelah shall yield up her dead and Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob shall live, again, in the fullest sense, for their bodies as well as their souls shall live again! And Joseph's bones, which he would not allow to lie in Egypt–for he would not let the Egyptians have a scrap of him–shall live, and thus, in their flesh, shall they see God and shall rejoice before Him. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called the God of these people who all died in faith because they are still living–and they shall continue to live forever and ever!

Somebody may, perhaps, say that these people did not receive the promises. Well, they did not literally receive thefulfillment of them.

They did not see Christ. They did not witness the descent of the Holy Spirit. They did not hear the Gospel preached. They did not see those wonders that they looked for–so is not God ashamed to be called the God of people who, after all, did not receive the promises? No, because "He has prepared for them a city." They have receivedthe promises now and they shall receive them yet more and more! God will yet cause the Believer's life to be all blessing. Do not be afraid of the consequences of trusting in Christ–you may have the rough side of the road, here, but what we sang, just now, is quite true–

"Afflictions may press me, they cannot destroy,
One glimpse of His love turns them all into joy!
And the bitterest tears, if He smiles but on them,
Like dew in the sunshine, grow diamond and gem!
Let doubt, then, and danger my progress oppose–
They only make Heaven more sweet at the close.
Come joy or come sorrow, whate'er may befall,
An hour with my God will make up for them all!"

If God gave to His children gall and wormwood to drink here–yes, if they never had anything but aches and pains from the moment of their conversion till they died–yet they would have the best of the bargain, after all, for there is an eternity of bliss in the Heaven which is prepared for them!

But, further, these people were a sort of gypsies, always moving about and living in tents, different from everybody else. Yes, they were strangers among the people where they dwelt. And men often say of us, now, that we cannot be content to go on as other people do. Those Patriarchs were strangers, odd folk, peculiar people. Is not God ashamed to be called their God? No, because they have now gone where they are all right, for their manners and customs are exactly suitable to the place. A very dear old woman, whom I visited when she was dying, said to me, "One thing comforts me, Sir, I do not think that God will ever send me among the wicked, for I never could get on in their company. The best times I have ever had were when I could sit with a few of the Lord's people and hear them talk about Him. And though I could not always be sure that I was, myself, a Christian, yet I was very much like them and I was very happy when I was with them. I think I shall go to my own company, Sir." Yes, dear Soul, and so she did! And if we are strangers here, we are going to that company where we shall not be strangers! They will understand our language when once we get across the river into the King's own country. "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God" because they speak the language which He speaks, the language of His own courts–and He is not ashamed to say, "These are My people, and I acknowledge them before you all."

Notice, yet again, that these people were seekers and desirers all their lives. “They seek a country.” “They desire abetter country.” Is this a right state of heart for a Christian–to always be seeking and always desiring? Well, Brothers and Sisters, that is the state in which I often am and I wish, still, to stay in that condition–always seeking, always desiring. Whenever God gives me any spiritual blessing, I always seek more. And if He gives me more, I seek for still more! And if He gives me my heart’s desire, I pray Him to enlarge my heart that I may desire some greater gift. For, in spiritual things, we may be as covetous as we like! We may say, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended. But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” And God is not ashamed to be called the God of those who are thus seeking and desiring because He has laid up for them all that they seek! And He has prepared for them all that they desire! I would be ashamed to set a poor person desiring if I could not gratify the desire. I would be ashamed to set a man seeking if I knew that he could not get what he sought after. But because God has prepared a city for these seekers and desirers, He is not ashamed to be called their God!

As I stood, this evening, by the bedside of the dear Brother whom I mentioned to you a little while ago, I could not help saying, “Here is a poor soul covered with boils and blisters, but God is not ashamed to be called his God.” And there may be a child of God who is very poor, indeed, with hardly sufficient garments to cover him, but God is not ashamed to be called his God, either. Perhaps his own brother is ashamed to be called his brother. I have even known cases where men have been so wicked as to be ashamed of their own parents because they were not so well off as themselves. But God is never ashamed of His poor people. Yes, and if God’s people are persecuted, and ill-used. If they are covered with mud from head to foot, or if they are cast into prison, God is not ashamed to be called their God. In those days when God permitted His people to be fastened up to the cross, or when others were taken to the stake and burnt, and everybody hissed at them, and cast out their name as evil, and said that they were the offscouring of all things–God was not ashamed to be called their God!

I am almost ashamed to say what I am going to say. I really feel my very heart blush that I should have to say it. I have known some professors who have been ashamed to call God their God! Is it not strange that the glorious God of Heaven and earth should call a worm His own, and take mean wretches such as we are, and say, “I am not ashamed to be called their God,” and yet that some of these creatures should be so miserably cowardly that they are ashamed to

be called the people of God? Oh, write His name on your foreheads! Never be ashamed of it! Ashamed of God? Ashamed of Jesus? Ashamed of the Truth? Ashamed of righteousness? I do not wonder that there is such a text as this–"The fearful"–that is the cowardly–"and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

If you really do love the Lord, come out and show yourself on His side! And if He is not ashamed of you and if your prayer is, "Lord, remember me when you come into Your Kingdom," acknowledge Him as your Lord and Savior now! You who are not members of any Christian Church–you who have believed in Christ, or think you have–and yet have never confessed Him. You who are hiding like rats behind the wall–come out and confess Christ! What are you doing? How can you be soldiers of the Cross and followers of the Lamb if you fear to acknowledge His cause and blush to speak His name? Come out of your hiding places! May God the Holy Spirit draw or drive you out at once! If anything could do it, surely, it should be such a blessed fact as this–that you are numbered among those of whom it is said that "God is not ashamed to be called their God."

God bless you, dear Friends, for Jesus' sake! Amen. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"–854, 847, 848.–

Ex 4:22-23; 6:1 • The Great Emancipator

SERMON 1440

T*he Great Emancipator*

"And you shall say unto Pharaoh, thus says the Lord, Israel is My son, even My firstborn: and I say unto you, Let My son go, that he may serve Me."

Exodus 4:22, 23

GOD had a people in Egypt. They were His own, the people of His choice. Although they had been grievously oppressed and had sunk into ignominious slavery, His interest in their welfare had in no degree lessened. The Lord's purpose in sending Moses down into Egypt was that He might fetch out that people from among the nations to make them a separate people to Himself that He might give them an inheritance, even the land which flowed with milk

and honey and that they might dwell there as witnesses of His Covenant and keep His Testimonies. Now precisely what God was doing towards His people, Israel, in the land of Ham, He is doing towards His own chosen ones throughout the whole world.

From one point of view the object of the Gospel is to gather out from among the nations a people whom He did foreknow, whom He did predestinate, whom He has redeemed unto Himself to be His peculiar heritage. These are to be fetched out from among others. They are to be made a separate people to be brought into a distinct position and to have a distinct experience. “The people shall dwell alone; they shall not be reckoned among the nations” and they are ultimately to be brought to a prepared place for which they are to be especially prepared that they may abide there and that the Lord may verify the thing that He has predicted of them, “They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels.”

The work of rescuing perishing sinners out of the present evil world is as worthy of God as the work of delivering Israel out of Egypt. The same right hand of Jehovah, glorious in power, which released the sons of Jacob from the thralldom of Pharaoh, is now stretched out to ransom us from the dominion of Satan! The song of praise to Jesus Christ our Redeemer shall be more exultant than that which Miriam and the daughters of Israel lifted up by the Red Sea when they said, “Come let us sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.” Indeed, we shall sing at the last, the song of

Moses, the servant of God and the song of the Lamb, clearly indicating that the redemption out of Egypt was always meant to be a leading type of the redemption of God's people from out of the midst of the world, for Christ has a people whom He has redeemed from among men, and there is a Church of which it is written, "Christ loved His Church and gave Himself for it."

Now, in the process of bringing out these people of God from among the mass of mankind, God sometimes uses instrumentality just as He did in the former case. He may employ an instrument that is apparently as little adapted for the work as Moses felt himself to be. Yet the work is done and to God belongs the honor of accomplishing it. As for those of us whom He uses, we are more than content to yield the honor to Him. We rejoice in His excellency while we feel that we cannot take to ourselves any credit whatever–for we are less than nothing in His sight–and even in our own sight we are weak and worthless, so that unto God, alone, shall the glory redound when redemption's work is finished and complete!

I invite you to think, first of all, upon the voice of God. According to our text, it is, "Thus says the Lord, Israel is My son, even My firstborn: and I say unto you, Let My son go, that he may serve Me." When we have dilated a little upon that, we shall need to have a few words upon the voice of man. This was to be the voice of man, "You shall say unto Pharaoh, Thus says the Lord." What God

had spoken was to be repeated by His servant, Moses. Then we shall close by noticing, in the third place, the power which was to go with this voice of man. “I will be with your mouth and you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh.”

Let us endeavor, then, at the outset, to fix our thoughts upon THE VOICE OF GOD which was a real power to bring up His people out of Egypt. That voice was threefold–asserting His proprietorship in them, demanding their freedom and ordaining their destiny. With imperial authority He claims the people as His own. “Thus says the Lord, Israel is My son, even My firstborn.” The Lord knows them that are His and the Lord declared them to be His own with a jealousy of His inalienable right to their allegiance and an assertion of His unfailing interest in their welfare. The children of Israel were, at that time, in a very sordid condition. They were up to their necks in clay, making bricks. They were a band of slaves, degraded, brought down to the lowest condition. They were so spiritless that they submitted to any exaction of the tyrant and when the day of deliverance dawned on them, they could not think emancipation possible, or welcome the joyful change in their prospects.

They had, as a nation, lost the very thought of liberty! It was trodden out. The people seemed as if they must lose their nationality or only retain it as a nation of slaves. Yet all begrimed and beslaved as they came to be, they were still beloved. The Lord

loved them! He said, “Israel is My son, even My firstborn.” Surely Pharaoh might have said in his heart, “This is a fine son! What must the God be who says of these brick makers, this abject race, ‘This is My son’?” Yes, and these ill-conditioned, unkempt serfs–these debased men and women, He says of them–“Even My firstborn, My son and heir.” A man is naturally proud of his son and heir, yet here is the mighty God speaking after the language of mortal men, acknowledging these cheerless, crestfallen, despised and dispirited people and saying, “Israel is My son, even My firstborn.”

He was acknowledging them, too, in the teeth of proud Pharaoh, whose firstborn was saluted as a prince of the blood royal when he rode through the land, before whom every knee bowed and to whom, as the son of the great king, homage was constantly rendered. “Israel is My son,” says God, “even My firstborn.” He is not ashamed of His people! He acknowledged His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sin, just as He loved His people Israel when they were still in bondage and in degradation. “He loved my soul out of the Pit,” said one of old. He loved us when we were lying in our blood like an infant cast out unswaddled and unwashed. When no eye pitied us in the day of our nativity and we were cast out in the open field, He passed by and it was a time of love. And He said unto us, “Live.”

Oh, wondrous Grace of God, that He acknowledges His son when that son is still an Egyptian slave!

Moreover, God acknowledged His people when they did not acknowledge Him, for His name, "Jehovah," was scarcely known to them. Although Moses presented himself to them with evident credentials, they were ready enough to reject him. We are informed in other parts of the Scripture that they had gone aside to false gods. During their sojourn in Egypt the Israelites fell into the prevailing superstition of the country and they forsook the Lord. Some little light still lingered among them. Some traditions were treasured and transmitted from sire to son in solemn trust. Doubtless there was a remnant of pious souls, faithful to the God of Abraham. The bones of Joseph, preserved in Goshen as a memorial of the oath that he took of their tribes, subsequently were carried through all their devious wanderings in the wilderness and ultimately buried in Sechem, as you read in the last chapter of the book of Joshua and they, I say, vouch for a fidelity we cannot wantonly forget.

But the bulk of the people had fallen into the snares which surrounded them and conformed to the fashions of those among whom their fortunes were cast–whose many gods and lords were superstitiously served in secret. They were not a people who could have scraped together so much as a molehill of merit if they had tried! They were a vain and vicious people, prone to supplant, yet

utterly supplanted. They were especially sinful because their marked proclivities which might have developed on the side of virtue were perverted into stains and stigmas on their reputation. Yet Jehovah says, “Israel is My son, even My firstborn.” And does the Lord acknowledge His people when they know Him not? Ah, blessed be His name, He does, or else they would never come to know Him! We love Him, now, because He first loved us and if there had not been that antecedent knowledge of us–and love towards us–we had not now been what we now are.

Oh, the freeness and spontaneity of the Grace of God that He should know His people and call them His own even when, as yet, they know Him not! He acknowledged this people by affirming His Covenant. “Israel is My son.” He was referring to the Covenant which He had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob of old. And the Lord knows His people and shows favor to them, not because of anything personal to recommend them, for there is no superiority in their nature, no brightness in their intellect, no beauty in their disposition that can be pleasing in His sight! The only title to Grace in His eyes is that ancient Covenant ordered in all things and sure which He has made, not with Abraham, but with our Lord Jesus, who stands as our Covenant Head!

We do not sufficiently reflect upon the Covenant as the great deep that lies under the fountain of many waters out of which all the

wells of salvation continue to be filled with the living waters of Grace–

"Never had you felt the guilt of sin,
Or sweets of pardoning love,
Unless your worthless name had been
Enrolled to life above."

If you had not an interest in that Covenant which He made in the eternal council chamber long before the earth was most assuredly in hapless, hopeless obscurity, you would have lived and died! This was the reason why He called Israel His son! An ancient Covenant had made Israel to be so regarded. How sweet it is that He does not merely speak about the people as being His people, but He says, "Israel is My son." There is a love between father and son which cannot be found elsewhere. Blood is thicker than water. Relationship has ties that cannot be relaxed.

"Yes, but," says one, "Does God ever call His people, in any place, His sons before they are regenerate?" Well, there is a text that says, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, whereby you cry, Abba, Father." It is because, in the purpose of God, His people are really His sons before they know anything at all about it, that in due time He sends the Spirit of His Son to give them the nature of children that they may enjoy the adoption of children and say, "Abba, Father." O Beloved, it is delightful to think that the Lord should look upon us

before we are born–before we are born again–with a love that cannot be measured and cannot be broken! The gist of this affirming was thus–"Israel is My son. You, Pharaoh, may call him your slave, but he is My child. He was Mine before he was yours. Israel is My son. You say, 'No, he is my serf.' I say, though he has fallen under your yoke, I will maintain My right to him as My firstborn. He is a prince and to that estate he shall be raised."

The Lord has a claim upon His people–a claim which all the claims of Law and all the clamors of sin and death and Hell shall never be able to deny. And though they basely submit to the claims of the Wicked One and make a covenant with Death and a league with Hell, yet shall Jehovah's claim upon them stand, for thus says the Lord, "Your league with Death is broken and your covenant with Hell is disannulled." The Lord Jesus will not suffer those whom He has made to be His own people and ransomed by the bloody purchase upon the Cross to remain the slaves of sin and Satan! They are His. His Father gave them to Him. They are His! He bought them. They are His! Their names are written on His hands and engraved on His side. They are His! He will not suffer so much as one of them to remain in bondage to the adversary.

By thus acknowledging His people, He puts in a positive claim which puts all other claims on one side. With the bare assertion of absolute right He demands their unconditional freedom. "Thus says the Lord, Israel is My son, even My firstborn: and I say unto you,

let My son go." What a grand verse that is! What an imperial edict it contains! As in the narrative of the Cosmos, God said, "Light be, and light was," so in the history of the exodus, short words are launched with Sovereign force–"Let My son go." Well might the proud heart of Pharaoh have quailed before the Almighty, whose lips asserted a right which His arm was instantly able to enforce. How aptly those tones apply to our deliverance from under the Law! The Law includes all mankind under its curse–the god of this world claims the whole human race as his subjects. In due time our Redeemer appears.

The Lord Jesus comes, identifies Himself with the enslaved family, bears the curse, fulfils the Law and then on the ground of simple justice demands for them full and perfect liberty, having fulfilled for them the precept and for them endured the penalty! "Let My son go." On what pretext could the Law, unless it were lawless and unjust, put in a claim which has been discharged, or urge a right which has already been fulfilled? No, from under the Law the people of God go free and their joy is that they are not under the Law but under Grace! And how gloriously do those tones sound when they come with force and power to rescue us from the tyranny of sin and Satan! The Prince of the power of the air holds men in subjection. He prejudices them and so stops their ears against the Gospel. He seals their eyes against the Eternal Light, but thus says the Lord, "Let My son go," and immediately the

prejudice vanishes, the ears are opened, Eternal Truth shines into the heart, scales drop from the eyes and the soul beholds the Heaven-born Light and begins to rejoice!

Satan will tie a soul down, sometimes, in very heavy bondage. I have known him fasten a soul down with steel chains and eternal life. But, “Thus says the Lord, let My son go.” The iron bands have snapped in a moment and the man has risen to hope and liberty, for the Lord’s voice breaks the chains! Fast bound by fearful habits which seemed impossible to give up–having plunged into one sin after another–the man has been shut in by one iron gate and then by another and another and was enclosed in the innermost ward of the prison. But at midnight he has been struck on the side when he was asleep in his senseless carelessness.

Around him has shone a great light–the Covenant Angel has come to him and led him through gate after gate! The iron gates have opened of their own accord and the man has found himself free and scarcely knew whether it was true or not! He knew not that it was true, but thought he saw a vision. The thing has been scarcely done before he has found himself to be alive and delivered from the bonds of sin, filled with astonishment at himself and saying, “How can this be?” His tongue has been filled with singing and his mouth with laughter and he has said, “The Lord has done great things for me, of which I am glad.”

Well, Beloved, the tones of that august voice which said, “Let My son go” will continue to echo as long as you and I are here below! We shall continue to be let go! This glorious liberty shall be made more manifest to us daily. Are we not as creatures made subject to vanity and compassed with infirmity? By-and-by we shall be liberated from the bondage of the flesh! Our bodies shall go down into the grave and lie there for a while in the prison of the tomb, but that voice which quickened us into spiritual life will resuscitate our bodies and cause them to enter into the resurrection-life of Christ! Through the dark, dismal vaults will sound the loud, cheerful voice “Let My son go,” and there shall not a bone of a Believer be left.

As it was said of old, “not a hoof shall be left behind,” so nothing that belongs to redeemed man shall be left in the grave. “Of all that You have given Me I have lost nothing,” says Christ, and truly, of person and of things–of all the people and of all that shall belong to the people to make up their manhood–there shall nothing be lost–the Lord shall have His own and His Grace shall triumph! This voice of God is an acknowledgment of His people and a claim for their deliverance–but no less is it an ordaining of their destiny. “Let My son go, that he may serve Me.” Oh yes, Beloved, we are no sooner set free from serving Pharaoh than we begin to serve Jehovah! “Let My son go, that he may serve Me.”

And in what capacity did Israel serve God? It was in the loftiest capacity possible! Israel became Jehovah's priest. It was in Israel that the sacrifice was offered. In Israel the incense was burnt. From Israel went up the sacred Psalm. Israel stood before the Lord in that high position of sacred privilege. So, likewise, is it that as soon as a man is brought out of the bondage of sin, he presents unto the Lord the sacrifice of Christ by faith and afterwards goes on to present himself a living sacrifice. Thus his thanksgivings and his broken and contrite heart are perpetual oblations and offerings of a sweet smelling savor, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Israel became the servant of God by way of preserving the Testimony. His were the Oracles. Israel kept the knowledge of the one God. Israel kept the Revelation of the Most High. While all the world outside was dark, Israel preserved the Light.

To this end, in like manner, Brothers and Sisters, you and I are called of God. If He has brought us up out of the Egypt of sin, we are to present daily sacrifice. We are to bear daily testimony to the Truth of God. And oh, if we do not–should we begin to stagger through unbelief, or speak with bated breath of the Truth that has been surely made known to us. Should the fear of man, or the fashion of the age so beguile our hearts, becloud our eyes, belie our good profession and utterly befool our common sense that we shall blush to bear our testimony–what shame must cover us! What confusion must take hold upon us! But, blessed be His name, He

will keep His own true to His Word. If it were possible, the free-thinkers and the false teachers in these days would deceive the very elect–but that is out of the question–it is beyond the range of possibility!

All God's children shall be taught of the Lord and they shall hold His Truth and bear witness to it, even to the world's end! Israel was to be God's servant to serve Him by walking by faith. What a wonderful 40 years' walk that was in the wilderness! They did not live up to it but still, the spirit of that march of mystery was very wonderful. Without sowing or reaping they were fed! They were supplied with water without fountain, reservoir, or watercourse. They were guided without a compass and without one sign of track way over shifting sand! Yet they were always well-fed, wellhoused and, what was still more marvelous, their camps were well shaded by day and well lit by night! They had a choice experience of having nothing and yet possessing everything! With no fertile fields or fruitful trees, yet Israel was made to live upon the fat of the kidneys of wheat and to ride upon the high places of the earth. She had all things and she abounded. The Lord was her Shepherd and she did not want!

We are often called upon to serve God and that very conspicuously, though we may be little conscious of it when we are required to walk by faith. This is the work of God, the grandest work a man can do–to believe on Him whom He has sent. The

godlike work, the work of works is this–to walk by faith, living upon the unseen God! Israel was to be God's servant by continually dwelling in happy fellowship with God and waiting upon Him with holy worship. Nowhere else, in all the world, was a Passover or a feast of tabernacles kept to do Him homage–and nowhere else was the Sabbath hallowed and observed. With them, alone, Jehovah dwelt and among them Jehovah shone forth. And so, Beloved, if you and I have been called out of bondage, it is that we may serve the Lord!

Are we all alive to our obligation? Are we faithful to our higher calling? Are we doing our sworn, sacred duty? If anyone here is rescued this night from the grip of the Destroyer, delivered from the bondage of this evil world, saved from the damning power of sin–know that when you leave one corps, you must enlist into another corps! You come in fresh from the enemy's camp, not to be treated as a prisoner, but as a recruit! You must enlist to assail the powers and passions you once defended. God would have you become His servant that you may serve Him with joy and gladness all your days. Thus, then, I have opened up the voice of God as far as my time or strength or knowledge has permitted.

II. Now, secondly, here was THE VOICE OF MAN. What a comedown it seems to be. "You shall say unto Pharaoh, Thus says the Lord, Let My son go." Why did not the Lord say it Himself? Why did He need to pick up a Moses and send him to say it? Well,

dear Friends, had the Lord said it Himself to Pharaoh, it would have been very startling and Pharaoh must have yielded ultimately to the Divine fiat–but don't you see the deeper marvel in the milder proceeding–when Jehovah, as it were, hides His power and cloaks it in weakness?

Instead of appealing to Pharaoh with that Voice which breaks the cedars of Lebanon and makes the hinds to calve, He speaks to him by one who was slow of speech and of a stammering tongue! Now, if God's voice can vanquish Pharaoh when it masks itself behind the feebleness of a stuttering, stammering Moses, it will be more glorious than it would have been if it had used no instrumentality whatever! Why does not the Lord speak to every sinner directly and bring him out and save him? Well–He might do so. He might do it if He would–but when He condescends, instead, to take us poor mortals who have tasted of His love and says to us, "Now you go and be My voice: you go and speak for Me," oh, then His Grace and power are not less conspicuous, but they are far more admirable! In using such ill-adapted tools for the accomplishment of His great designs, He shows His own transcendent power!

That famous well-cover at Antwerp, just opposite the cathedral–one of the finest pieces of worked iron that was ever known–is said to have been made by Quintyn Matsys with nothing but a hammer and a file, his fellow workmen having taken away his tools. If it is so, the more praise is due to his consummate skill. All the works of

God redound to His Glory–but when the tools He uses appear to be totally inadequate to the results He achieves–our reverence is excited, while our reason is abashed and we marvel at a power we cannot understand! This comes home to some of us very closely. Let us put it to ourselves. Does the Lord take you, my Brother, or has He taken me–and does He speak words of eternal power through our poor little tongues–through these unruly members that are prone to do so much mischief?

If He really wins souls through them, or pulls down the pride of Pharaoh through them, then shall it ring through eternity that the Lord has done marvelous things! He has taken the worm and made him to be a sharp thrashing instrument, having teeth–and made him to thrash the mountains! He has chosen the weak things of the world to confuse the things which are mighty! Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings has He ordained strength because of His enemies, that He might still the enemy and the avenger. Unto His name be Glory forever and ever!

The feebleness of the human voice has never appeared more palpable than when it has attempted to repeat the sentences which have been uttered by the mouth of the Lord. Moses seems to think that there must be some mistake! Can it be that God means to bring Israel out of Egypt by him? Whenever God designs to make His servants eminently useful, He lets them know their frailty. The more treasure there is in the vessel, the less will its comeliness be

vaunted. It is mere common ware, an earthen vessel that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us! But when Moses found that he really was employed of God, how fearless he was of ridicule! He went in unto Pharaoh and delivered his Master's message.

The interview with Moses and Aaron must have seemed supremely ridiculous to Pharaoh. It put him into a great rage. These two Israelites, wretched slaves, coming to tell the great king of Egypt that he must let Israel go! How absurd! Even to the Israelites it must have appeared preposterous, for two persons such as these to go in before the king. Why, with a word he could have said, "Take off the dogs' heads," and so have ended all the business directly! Yet they went and bearded him in his royal palace and delivered what he might think a vain menace, but what they knew to be a veritable message from God! Insignificant as we, of ourselves, may be, the very fact that God instructs us to speak might suffice to quell our fears. We must go and speak the Lord's message and must not be afraid of being thought infatuated.

When I have sometimes bid a sinner live and believe in Christ, I have heard a mutter, "What is the good of telling a dead man to live?" Some wise Brother has said, "You might as well shake a pocket handkerchief over a grave." Yes, Brother, it is true–quite true. So might Moses as well have shaken a pocket handkerchief outside Pharaoh's palace but, when God bid him to go and tell

Pharaoh to let His people go, he went and did it. And when the Lord bids any of us go to a sinner and say, “Believe,” we cannot make the sinner believe–neither can he make himself believe–but the preacher sent of God is an echo of God’s voice! God speaks through him! With authority he is commissioned to say to the sinner, “Turn you, turn you; why will you die? Repent and be baptized, every one of you.”

We are bid to speak peremptorily, as ambassadors of the King–not because of any prerogative we assume–but as we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience, there is power in our message. The voice that speaks by stammering Moses is Divine, notwithstanding the ridicule that may be heaped upon it. Moses, having such a command to go and speak, must be undeterred by refusal. “I know not the Lord,” said Pharaoh, “neither will I let His people go.” Now, dear Brother, you cannot win souls unless you are prepared to meet with strong rebuffs. Yes, but some are heartbroken if any resistance is offered them! You may expect it. Old human nature does not know the Lord.

You remember how Melancthon thought he was going to convert any number of people when he began to preach, but when he found out his mistake, he said, “Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon.” So he is. You will come across a bit of grit every now and then which will break your knife. Be not dismayed, the Lord will sharpen you and make you stronger and stronger yet, for even

that Pharaoh who said, “I will not let the people go,” will be down on his knees presently begging the people to depart! We must be prepared for opposition and neither flinch nor quail, but brace ourselves up for the struggle.

So, too, the man whom God sends ought to be assured of success. I am persuaded that Moses, after he got over his first little difficulties with the people and recovered from his own diffidence, parleyed not with doubt, but was strong in faith. There he stood with the wondrous rod, turning waters into blood and slaying all their fish; covering the heavens with blackness; turning the dust into living creatures; bringing hail and grievous murrain and doing it all as calmly and quietly as he should do who feels that he is the voice of God! How steadily he kept at his work! With what diligence he persevered in it, till at last the 10

th plague found Moses unmoved, ready to conduct the people away to the Red Sea and to

bring them out into the wilderness!

O servants of God, be calm and confident! Go on preaching the Gospel! Go on teaching in the Sunday school! Go on giving away tracts! Go on with steady perseverance! Be sure of this–you shall not labor in vain or spend your strength for nothing! Do you still stutter? Are you still slow of speech? Nevertheless, go on! Have you been rebuked and rebuffed? Have you had little else but defeat? This is the way to success! You shall pave the road with the

rough flints of your failure! Toil on and believe on! Be steadfast in your confidence, for with an high hand and an outstretched arm the Lord will fetch out His elect and He will fetch some of them out by you! Only trust in the Lord and hold on the even tenor of your way!

III. Our last word is upon THE POWER OF GOD. Without the power of God the voice of man would have been an utter failure. What effect was produced by the voice of Moses? Went there not forth with it a power which plagued Pharaoh? It filled the sinful land of Egypt with plagues! So men that preach God's Gospel with God's power fill the world with plagues. "I know that," a man says. "I wish I had never listened to that fellow. I could not sleep last night." No, the frogs were his bedchamber! The true preacher finds his hearer sometimes saying, "I will never go again. Wherever I am, I seem to be haunted and tormented with the Truth of God that man has spoken so badly and so boldly. The commands he enforces run counter to the prejudices I cherish! They alarm my conscience and worry me incessantly."

Yes, he has made a simple sermon bring forth all manner of flies–thoughts that will sting a man wherever he goes and he cannot escape from them! He still kicks and strives against the Gospel–rebels against it, won't have it–gets angry; goes to the theater one night; joins in a little social revelry another night, but to no purpose. He does not enjoy anything! He scarcely knows why. Soon a thick darkness comes over the whole scene of life, as the

darkness came over all the land of Egypt. All that was beautiful and brilliant is now obscured. All that was pleasant and joyous is now eclipsed. The man finds that he does not even enjoy the ordinary comforts of life! He does not know why. He does not intend to yield to the Gospel, yet his very bread seems sour and the water he draws from the well is brackish and bitter.

His troubles multiply and follow one another in quick succession. Now a hail storm that leaves desolation behind! Then a grievous disease among the cattle. The hand of the Lord is not confined to the farm. It will visit your home. His terrible judgment reaches your family, your fondest love, your firstborn son. As of old there was a cry going up in the land of Egypt so that it was intolerable to stay there, so God lays bare His arm in the exceedingly great plagues which His terrible Law brings upon a man! When He means to fetch him out and bring him to Himself, God's servants become the harbingers of plagues! Jesus Himself said, "I came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword."

That sword is unsheathed and families are divided against each other with the grand intent that Israel should be brought out and peace established by the Redemption which Jehovah has provided. What will occur, by-and-by? Why, the oppressor will be glad to part with his bondmen. It sometimes happens that the ungodly become very glad to get rid of God's chosen people whom they are prone to persecute. "Their melancholy ill agrees with our

liveliness," so they say. They did all they could to invite them to their parties and get them into their frivolities again–they laid traps for them to keep them away from hearing the Gospel–but now the Lord has begun to deal with them!

Their old companions say, "Now we must leave him." "I have tried all I could to get our old comrade back to our old parties," says one, "but, really, he said such things that he quite poisoned all our pleasures. We could not enjoy ourselves! I say, let us get rid of him. Do not let him be in our company any more." Yes, it is a grand thing when the preaching of the Gospel makes the ungodly want to keep the converts away from their cliques–when they say, "Oh, go off to the Tabernacle! We do not want you here. You have pestered us enough with your religion, your prayers, your crying, your tears, your talk about being lost and your needing to find a Savior! You are bad company and you had better be gone."

A lady who joined this Church some years ago, moving in the higher circles of society, said to me, "I was quite willing to continue my acquaintance with my friends, but I found they gave me the cold shoulder and did not want me." Just so. It is a great mercy when the Egyptians say, "Get you gone," and when they are ready to give you jewels of silver and jewels of gold to get rid of you! The Lord wants His people to come right out and to be separate! He knows how to, by the simple utterance of the Gospel, put such a division between His people and those who are not His

people, that even the ungodly shall begin to say, “Get you gone! We want to have nothing further to do with you!” Glory be to God when such a thing as that happens!

And the Lord knows how to make all opposition cease, for it is written that when Israel came out of Egypt, not so much as a dog moved his tongue against the children of Israel. Before, they were such slaves that if a cur barked at them they dared not turn against it, for fear it should be the dog of an Egyptian who would be surely down upon them for meddling with his dog. How dare a slave do that? Everybody was against them. But when the Lord brought them out, there was not a dog that dared bark that night! The Egyptians were all anxious that they should be gone and willing that they should go. And Pharaoh, too, must have astonished his subjects with his sudden zeal to see this strange people gone. Do you know what that means?

Oh, what fights and battles; what wars and strife there were in my soul when I was trying to find Christ! My old sins came up against me! My memory unearthed buried trespasses–faults and failings gathered in force like a flood and threatened to overwhelm me. Everything in my constant studies and in my daily experiences seemed to drive me back from Christ. But on that memorable Sabbath morning when I heard the word, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth,” I did look and lo, against me not a dog did move his tongue! My sins did not complain! They

were drowned in the Red Sea of Jesus' blood! My old corruptions–I did not know at the time that I had any–they were so very quiet! Temptations ceased to trouble me!

For that little while, at any rate, the warrior seemed to sheathe his sword and the brick maker laid down his clay to go out of Egypt with jewels of silver and jewels of gold! I could sing unto the Lord, for He had triumphed gloriously! I have met some of these old Egyptians since then–a good number of them–and I have had some hard dealings with them. But, at that time, all was still and quiet, happy and blessed–

"Happy day, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away!"

With the Paschal Lamb in our mouths nobody dares to challenge us. The blood on the door is an unanswerable answer to every accuser, caviler, or adversary! Glory be to God, then, who thus can fetch out His people and deliver them from their sins, their lusts, their habits, their passions–deliver them from death–deliver them from going down into the Pit and so deliver them that none shall lay anything to their charge, since God has justified them and Christ has absolved them!

May the Lord grant us Grace to be used as His instruments as Moses was. And may we, each one of us, cry unto the Lord if we are in bondage, just as Israel did in Egypt! May the Lord in mercy send forth concerning every poor sinner here just such a message as

He sent concerning His people in the house of bondage–“Thus says the Lord, Let My son go, that he may serve Me.” If He will thus work among us as in the olden times, to Him shall be the glory now at this present, yes, and forevermore. Amen!

Ex 6:9 • To the Saddest of the Sad

SERMON 2026

T*o The Saddest Of The Sad*

"And Moses spoke so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage."

Exodus 6:9

LITTLE words often contain great meanings. It is often the case with that monosyllable "so." In the present instance we must lay stress upon it and read the text thus–"Moses spoke so unto the children of Israel." That is, he said what God told him to say. He did not invent his message. He did not think out the Gospel that he had to carry to the people. He was simply a repeater of the Divine message. As he received it, so he spoke it. "Moses spoke so unto

the children of Israel." If he had not done so, the responsibility must have rested upon himself, whether the nation was moved by his words or not. But when he was simply God's ambassador, saying only what God would have him say, his responsibility was limited.

If he delivered the Lord's own Word and it failed to win the heart of Israel, he could not be blamed. Although it was a great sadness of heart to him that the people did not and even could not receive the Divine message, yet as far as he was concerned, his conscience was clear. It is ever so with the preacher of the Gospel–if he declares the Word of the Lord as he has received it, whether men will hear or whether they will not, he is clear before God, whatever his hearers may do or may not do.

I often wonder what those preachers do who feel called to make up their message as they go on. For if they fail, their failure must be attributed in great measure to their want of ability to make up a moving tale. They have to spread their sails to the breeze of the age and to pick up a Gospel that comes floating down to them on the stream of time, altering every week in the year. And they must have an endless task to catch this new idea, or, as they put it, to keep abreast of the age. Unless, indeed, like chameleons, they have a natural aptitude to change color, they must have a worrying time of it and a horrible amount of shifting to get through.

When they have done their best to preach this gospel of their own, then they are accountable for having made that gospel. For every bit of its teaching they are accountable because they were the manufacturers of it and it came forth from their foundry, bearing their stamp. If they take this yoke upon them and so refuse to learn of Christ, they will find no rest for their souls. To me the preaching of the Lord's own Gospel is a joy and a privilege. Concern for your souls loads me with the burden of the Lord–it is His burden and not one which I have selected for myself. I often feel on a Sabbath night when I go home weary–"I know that I have preached what I believe to be God's Gospel."

I have not said anything–I have not intended to say anything that was my own. I have not left out, at least I have not intended to leave out, anything that was in the text, nor anything which I believe to be the teaching of the Gospel of Christ. And then if you do not receive it, that is a sorrowful business, but it is no concern of mine so that I shall have to answer for it at the Last Great Day. When a man-servant goes to the door with a message from his master, if you do not like what he tells you, do not be angry with him. What has he to do with it? Has he said what his master told him to say? If he has, then be angry with his master if you must be, or accept what his master says if you think fit. But let the poor man that brought the message be held clear if he has faithfully reported his master's words.

I claim that if I have preached my Master's Gospel, whether men are saved or lost, whether they accept it or reject it, I must leave that with themselves and not have their sin laid at my door. How heartily do I cry to God that the Word may not be a savor of death unto death but a savor of life unto life. But oh, my Hearers, if you perish after hearing the Gospel of God, do not think that you can cast the blame on me.

Now, the message Moses brought was rejected and he knew why it was rejected. He could see the reason. The people were in such bondage, they were so miserably ground down, they were so unhappy and hopeless, that what he spoke seemed to them to be as idle words. There are hundreds of reasons why men reject the Gospel. We will not go into them tonight. He that wants to beat a dog can always find a stick and he that wishes to reject Christ can always find a reason for it. And, however unreasonable a reason may be, it will serve a sinner's turn, when that turn happens to be the making of some excuse for himself why he should not yield to the Savior. Oh that men were less cunning in making apologies for refusing the Lord Jesus!

Among all the reasons, however, that I ever heard, that with which I have the most sympathy for, is this one–that some cannot receive Christ because they are so full of anguish and are so crushed in spirit that they cannot find strength of mind enough to entertain a hope that by any possibility salvation can come to them.

It is to their sad case that I desire to speak. I think that I can speak to the case, if God help me, for I have felt the same myself. I do remember when I could not believe even Jesus Himself by reason of sore anguish and straitness of spirit. And, therefore, as one who has worn the chains, I speak to those who are still in chains.

I know the clanking of those fetters. I know what it is to feel the damp of the stone walls and to fear that there is no coming out of prison. I know and have felt the despair that even when the emancipator turned the great key in the lock and set the door wide open–yet still my heart had made for itself a direr cage. And I could not believe in the possibility of liberty–therefore I sat bound in a dungeon of my own creation. Ah, there is no Bastille so awful as that which is built by despair and kept under the custody of a crushed spirit. Many are the desponding ones whose eyes fail so that they cannot look up or look out. To such I speak. May God speak through me by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter!

And first, will you notice that what Moses brought to these people was glad tidings. IT WAS A FREE AND FULL GOSPEL MESSAGE. To them it was the Gospel of salvation from a cruel bondage, the Gospel of hope, the Gospel of glorious promise. It is a very admirable type and metaphorical description of what the Gospel is to us. Moses' word to them was singularly clear, cheering and comforting. But they could not receive it. “They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit and cruel bondage.”

First, Moses spoke to them about their God. He said, “You have a God, and His name is Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob.” They looked up from their bricks and they seemed to say, “God? What have we to do with Him? Oh, that the straw were given us to make our bricks! We are up to our necks in this filthy Nile mud making bricks. And you come and talk to us about God. Go and preach to Pharaoh and the taskmasters that rule us. But as for us poor creatures, slaves that we are, we do not understand you. What do you mean by Jehovah, our God? Bring us more garlic and onions, or lessen our daily tasks, or take away the sticks from our drivers and then we will listen to you.”

And so they shook their heads and said that such mysteries and theologies were not for them. And yet, dear Sirs, if any of you are in such a case, it is for you–Jehovah, Israel’s God, was indeed their only hope and He is your only hope, also. Alas, that they should be so unwise as to refuse to let the light shine upon them, for light it was! What a poor reason for refusing light because the night is so dark! Man’s best hope lies in his God. O you whose lives are bitter with toil and want, there is something for you after all, much better than the hard saying, “What shall we eat and what shall we drink?”

There is an inheritance above the grinding toil of everyday life. There is a portion much better than this killing care which frets so many of you and makes life a calamity to you. Do not, therefore, because of the heaviness of your lot, refuse to hear about God, your

Maker, your Benefactor. In that direction lies your only real hope. Have this God for a Father and a Friend, and life will wear another aspect and you will be another man.

Then Moses went on to tell them about a Covenant. He said, "You have a God and that God has said, 'I have also established My Covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.' " Covenant? Why, many of them would hardly know what it meant. "Covenant?" they said, "God make a Covenant with us poor brick makers, that have to slave from morning to night without wages and now are forced to make bricks without straw?" God and a Covenant–these are strange words in ears that hear the curses of taskmasters and the crack of their whips. It sounded like mockery to them to talk of such high matters.

I doubt not they muttered to themselves, "This Moses is a mad philosopher who has grand mouthfuls of words. But what are words to us? A bit of fish out of the Nile, or a cucumber from the irrigated fields would be a deal better than talking to us about a Covenant." And yet, hearken. If any of you are in a sad condition, your best hopes may lie this way. What if God has entered into Covenant with you that He will bless you for Jesus Christ's sake? There may be a mint of wealth for the sons of poverty in this Everlasting Covenant. And the best kind of wealth, too. There may

be for you a promised emancipation which will break the fetters which now hold you–and set you free.

I tell you that in the Covenant of Grace lies the charter of the poor and needy. At any rate, if you come under that Covenant it cannot be worse with you than it is now. You seem now to be under a covenant of bondage and of sorrow and any change will be for the better. If there be another covenant–a Covenant of Grace and love and peace and everlasting faithfulness–it were worth while to hear about it and to seek it out until you discover whether you have part and lot in it. I entreat you, look into this matter. Hearken diligently to the voice of the Gospel. Hear and your soul shall live.

So, when Moses had spoken of the Covenant, he went on to speak yet more about God's pity to them. He reported that Jehovah had said, "I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage and I have remembered My Covenant." I fancy that those words opened their eyes a little. They looked up and said to one another, "Is there, indeed, a God who has heard our groanings? Oh but," they muttered, "look at the many years we have been groaning. Why, it is forty years since this man Moses first came out and saw our burdens. Where has he been these forty years? What is the use of pity that is so tardy in its movements?"

And yet, dear Sirs, if you are inclined to talk so, it may be that if God is slow He is nevertheless sure. And if He is slow to you it is

out of patience and longsuffering to others. He knows best when and how to save His people. Remember that when the tale of bricks was doubled, then Moses came. And when you are getting to your very worst and your night is darkening into a sort of hellish midnight it may be that your darkness is coming to an end. Therefore, be not so bowed down as to let the brick–earth–get into your ears and eyes and make you deaf and blind. But listen to see if there is anything to be heard that is better than your daily moans and groans. Listen to the messenger of God who comes to tell of what God is about to do. He is a God full of compassion and He has respect unto broken hearts and tearful eyes.

And then Moses went on further with his blessed Gospel message to tell them about the Lord's resolve to rescue them by a great redemption. The Lord had said, "I am Jehovah and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and I will rid you out of their bondage." Do you notice that all along the Lord uses strong words and speaks like a great king? "I am Jehovah. I will. I will. I will." When you go home just notice what a number of "I wills" there are in this declaration of the great God. When God says, "I will," He means it. Depend upon it. He does not ask our leave, or wait for our help. "I will" is omnipotence putting itself into speech.

Jehovah will accomplish what He promises. He told them, therefore, that He meant to come to their rescue. "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and I will rid you out

of their bondage. I will redeem you with a stretched out arm and with great judgments." God means to save you. Poor, troubled, confessedly guilty Sinner, believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God and trust yourself with Him and the Lord will save you. He will deliver you from all the guilt of your past life, from the evil habits of your present life and from the temptations of your future life. He will break the yoke of Satan from off your neck and make you to be no more the slave of sin but you shall become the child of the living God.

Moses told them about the Lord's ways of Divine Grace and the inheritance which He had prepared for them. My message is after the same sort. Thus says Jehovah tonight, in the preaching of the Gospel to everyone that will believe in Jesus, "I will save and I will deliver you. And I will be to you a God–and you shall know that I am your God, which brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. And I will give it you for an heritage–I am the Lord."

These are great words but they come from the mouth of the great God who cannot lie. Therefore believe them and take heart of hope. God will take you, poor guilty ones, to be His children. He will promote you to be His willing servants. He will use you for His Glory though now you dishonor His name. He will sanctify you and cleanse you and He will bring you to Heaven, even you who

have lain among the pots and have been deified in the brick kilns of sin. He will never rest till He makes you sit upon His Throne with Him, where He is glorified, world without end. This I speak to you who are in bondage. Even as Jesus said of old, so say I in my measure as His messenger–"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me. Because he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

Believe in Christ Jesus and He who has come to save the lost will give you as clear and clean a deliverance from the power of sin as Jehovah gave Israel deliverance from the power of the Egyptian tyrant. He will bring you out of bondage and guide you through the wilderness till you come into the eternal rest, even to a better land than Canaan, though it flowed with milk and honey.

II. We come now to note that IT WAS RECEIVED WITH UNBELIEF CAUSED BY ANGUISH OF HEART. The message was from the Lord and it was full of hope for them but they were too much broken down to receive it. We can quite understand what that meant. Let us look into the scene. They could not now receive this Gospel because they had at first caught it and had been disappointed. They were under a misapprehension, for they expected to be free at once, as soon as Moses went to Pharaoh. And as they did not get immediate relief, they fell back into sullen despair. When Moses came to them and said that God had appeared

to him at the bush and had sent him to deliver them, they bowed their heads and worshipped.

Great things they looked for on the morrow, for they were at the end of their patience. But after that, when Moses went in unto Pharaoh and the tyrant doubled their labor by denying them straw, then they could not believe in God or in His messenger. In the process of salvation it often happens–I have seen it many times–after persons have come to hear the Gospel, after they have, in some measure, become attentive to its invitations, they have for a season been much more miserable than they were before. Have you never noticed, in taking a medicine, how often you are made to feel more sick before you are made well? It is often so in the workings of the great remedy of Divine Grace–it shows us our disease that we may the more heartily accept the heavenly medicine.

Yes, and in special cases there may be evils within the spiritual system which must be thrown out in the flesh to be made visible and so to become the subjects of repentance and abhorrence. The man who judges with shortness and straitness of judgment demands a remedy that will cure his soul of all evils on the spot. And if it does not evidently and immediately do this, he cries, “Away with it.” I find that the Hebrew word translated “anguish” here signifies shortness. Your marginal Bibles have “straitness.” So they could not believe because of the shortness of their judgment–they

measured God by inches. They limited the great and infinite God to minutes and days.

And so, as they found themselves, at first, getting into a worse case than before, they said to Moses, deliberately,“ Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians.” They did as good as say–“You have done us no good. Indeed, you have increased our miseries. And we cannot believe in you or accept your message as really from God, seeing it has caused us a terrible increase of our sufferings.” Grace may truly and effectually come to a heart, and for a while cause no joy, no peace. I have known many a man coming to this Tabernacle who has been prospering in business, and so on, and yet he has been going down to Hell as fast as ever he could travel.

By God’s Grace he has come and heard the Gospel and he has made a great many improvements in his conduct. And he has even become a regular and attentive hearer. And at that very time he has fallen into an affliction, the like of which he had never experienced before. And he has consequently complained, “Why, I am worse instead of better. I find my heart grows more rebellious against God than ever it was before.” I do not wonder that it should be so, for I have seen so many examples of it. The discipline of the household of God begins very early. But a present increase of sorrow has nothing to do with what the main result will be, except that it works towards it in a mysterious manner.

Perhaps what you at first thought was genuine faith was not faith–and God is going to knock down the false before he builds up the true. If you had an old house and any friend of yours were to say, "John, I will build you a new house. When shall I begin?" "Oh," you might say, "begin next week to build the new house." At the end of the week he has pulled half your old house down. "Oh," you say, "this is what you call building me a new house, is it? You are causing me great loss–I wish I had never consented to your proposal." He replies, "You are most unreasonable–how am I to build you a new house on this spot without taking the old one down?"

And so it often happens that the Grace of God does seem in its first work to make a man even worse than he was before, because it shows to him sins which he did not know to be there, evils which had been concealed, dangers never dreamed of. Thus the work of Divine Grace even makes his bondage seem to be heavier than ever it was. And yet this is all done in wisdom, in love and in fulfillment of the promise which God has given. I am never very much astonished when I find people ready almost to turn away from the hearing of the Gospel, because, after having at first heard it with pleasure, they find that, for the time being, it involves them in even greater sorrow than before.

How earnestly would I persuade them to overcome their very natural tendency to a hasty judgment! Press on, dear Friend. Be of

good courage. Pharaoh will not long be able to make you keep up that enormous number of bricks. Within a very few days he will be glad to get rid of you. Wait hopefully. For the God who begins in darkness will end in light and before long you will come to understand those ways of mercy which are now past finding out. Not many weeks after the sobbing and sighing at the brickyards, Moses and the children of Israel sang this song unto the Lord–"Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously–the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." The work of deliverance began very grimly but it ended very gloriously.

The inability of Israel to believe the message of Moses arose also from the fact that they were earthbound by heavy oppression–the mere struggle to exist exhausted all their energy and destroyed all their hope. The extreme hardness of their lot made them despondent and sullen. They had to work from morning to night. The Egyptian of the present age knows what it is to work very, very hard and to let their earnings go into the coffers of their precious princes. It seems always to have been so with wretched Egypt–it is ever the house of bondage. But these Israelites, being not even Egyptians, but strangers in Egypt, were worked without any pity or mercy. It was a daily question with them whether life was worth living under such cruel conditions.

I do not wonder that a great many are unable to receive the Gospel in this city of ours because their struggle for existence is

awful. I am afraid that it gets more and more intense, though even now it passes all bounds. If any of you can do anything to help the toil-worn workers, I pray you, do it. The poor workwoman who sits so many hours with the candle and needle and does not earn enough, when she has worked all those hours, and can just pay the rent and keep body and soul together–do you wonder that she thinks that this Gospel of ours cannot be for her and does not care to listen to it? I know that it would be her comfort but her soul refuses to be comforted, she is so crushed.

The dock laborer who comes home five days out of the six having earned nothing and hears his little children crying for bread–is it any wonder that he cannot hear about heavenly things? Why, it is with our white population very much as it was with the Negro population of Jamaica. When there was work to be had and they could get enough to eat and more, our Churches were crowded with them. They were the best of hearers and the speediest of converts. They were soon gathered into immense Churches. But when everything went badly with them and they had to work very hard barely to live, there were groups of backsliders and multitudes who did not feel that they could go to the House of God at all.

They said that they had no garments to wear and no money to spare. And do you wonder at it? Their poverty was so grinding and their toil so severe that the services they had once delighted in they had no heart for. It is all very easy to say that it ought not to be so.

But it is so. And it is so with multitudes in London. And yet, dear Friend–if such a one has come in here tonight–I pray you do not throw away the next world because you have so little of this. This is sheer folly. If I have little here, I would make sure of the more hereafter. If you have such a struggle for existence here, you should seek that higher, nobler, better life, which would give you, even in penury and want, a joy and a comfort to which you are a stranger now.

May the Holy Spirit come upon you and raise you out of this present evil world into newness of life in Christ Jesus! I do not find that God's people get into a condition of utter desolation–they are, at their very worst, kept from total desertion. For the Lord has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." They have to work hard and they may come very near to want but my observation satisfies me that they are happy still. They are joyful still. They are uplifted by the inner life above the down-dragging depression of external trials. I would to God that I could say a word that might comfort any child of poverty who should happen to be here tonight. And I pray the Lord Himself to be their comforter and helper.

But, worst of all, there are some who seem as if they could not lay hold on Christ because their sense of sin has become so intolerable and the wretchedness which follows upon conviction has become so fearful. They have grown almost to be contentedly despairing. I hardly know any condition of mind that is worse than chronic

despair when at last that which seemed alarming enough to drive to madness settles down into a lifeless, sullen moroseness. These Israelites had at last sunk so low that they said, “Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians.”

But your lot is terrible. “We know it is,” they said, “but we shall never get out of it.” But your bondage is horrible. “Yes but you may make it worse by interfering. You will only aggravate our taskmasters and bring upon us that last straw which breaks the back. Let us alone. We are doomed to suffer–we are predestined to be bondsmen. Let us go on as quietly as we may in our slavery. It may be that like poor fishes in the cave, we may lose our eyes yet and then we shall not know that it is dark, for we shall have lost the capacity for light.”

Oh, it is a dreadful thing when a heart gets to that–when a man desires that Christ would depart from him and let him alone to perish. Do not some men virtually say, “I know I am lost. Let me enjoy myself as well as I can. I cannot–I cannot enjoy sin. But don’t vex my conscience. Do not worry me with your talk, for I shall suffer enough hereafter. Do not tantalize me about saving faith, for I shall never believe. Do not begin talking to me about repentance. I shall never have a soft and tender heart. I know I never shall.”

A man who has begun to be numbed with cold, cries to his comrades, “Leave me to sleep myself to death.” And thus do

despairing ones ask to be left in their misery. Dear Soul, we cannot, we dare not, thus desert you. I will tell you what you shall do, dear Soul–give me a hearing. In the name of God, believe that there is yet hope –that even now Christ Jesus invites men and especially such as you, to put their trust in Him. O you who are burdened with sin, He calls you to let him be your Savior! If there is a man in the world He died for, you are the man.

If I see a physician hurrying down the street in his brougham and anybody says to me, "Where is that doctor going?" If I knew every house in the street, I should pick out the case of a man that I knew to be in the worst condition and most near to death's door. "Sir," I should say, "the doctor is going there. That dying person needs him most and I believe that he is hurrying to his bedside." If there is one man here that is worse than any other, more sad, more sick, more sorry, more despairing than another, my Lord Jesus Christ, who is here, has come to meet with such a one.

O troubled Heart, Jesus has come to seek and to save you! I am sure it is so. Hope! Just hope! Hope! You are not beyond hope of salvation–

"See, O Soul, you are yet alive,
Not in torment. Not in Hell.
Still does His good Spirit strive,
With the chief of sinners dwell."

Lift up your eyes, for you are not yet where the rich man was after his death and burial. Do not yet despair. Maybe there awaits you yet a happy life of joy in God. The sun may yet bring you brighter days, days of peace and rest and usefulness.

Did you ever hear the story of John Newton on the coast of Africa? He had got himself into such a state by his sins, his drunkenness, his vice, that at last he was left on the coast of Africa and virtually became a slave. Did John Newton dream, when he wandered up and down with a hungry belly, full of fever and at death's door that the day would come when he would be the companion and dear Friend of Cowper? And did he dream that the Church of St. Mary Woolnoth, over there in the city, would be crowded every time he stood up to preach of Free Grace and dying love? He did not think it but it was so predestined.

Something equally gracious may be ordained for you. Blasphemer, you may even preach the Gospel! O you Magdalene, full of filthiness, you will yet wash his feet with your tears and wipe them with the hairs of your head. You sin-stained villain, you may yet stand among that white-robed host of whom the angel asked, "Who are these and from where came they?" You, even you, will sing more sweet and loud than any of them unto Him that loved you and washed you from your sins in His precious blood. God make it so and unto His name shall be praise forever and ever!

III. I have many more things to say but I might weary you with them rather than bless you. The message was at first not received by Israel by reason of their anguish of soul but IT WAS TRUE FOR ALL THAT AND THE LORD MADE IT SO. What did the Lord do when He found that these people did not hearken to Moses for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage? What did the Lord do? He was not going to give them up because of their wretched condition. He had said, "I will bring them out," and he meant to do it.

The first thing the Lord did to prove His persevering Grace was to commission Moses again. (Exo. 6:1; 7:2). So the Lord God, in everlasting mercy, says to His minister, "You have to preach the Gospel again to them. Again proclaim My Grace." It seems a terrible thing to have to pour our souls into deaf ears. Yet I shall not give up, for I have done it with some here for nearly thirty-three years and I may as well go on. Why should I lose so much labor? I will try again, like Peter, who, after toiling all night and taking nothing, yet let down the net at the Lord's bidding. One of these days those dead ears will be made to live. God in mercy says, "Go on with it. As long as there is breath in your body, tell them to believe in My Son and they shall live. Tell them till you die that, 'He that with his mouth confesses and with his heart believes that God has raised Christ from the dead shall be saved.' "

But the Lord did more than that for Israel. As these people had not listened to Moses, He called Moses and Aaron to Him and He renewed their charge. He laid it upon them–gave them again their marching orders–"He gave them a charge unto the children of Israel and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt." A monstrous Aaron have to do it, however impossible it may appear. There is to be no backing out of it. They must know of a surety that Israel is to be delivered by their means.

It is a grand thing when the Lord lays the conversion of men on the hearts of His ministers and makes them feel that they must win souls. Moses was bound to bring out Israel. "But there is Pharaoh." Pharaoh is included in the Divine charge. They have to beat Pharaoh into submission. "But these children of Israel will not obey." The Lord put them in the charge–did you not observe the words, "He gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh"? Moses and Aaron, you have to bring Israel out. Pharaoh is to let them go and Israel is to go willingly. God has issued His royal decree and be you sure it will stand.

I believe that God is saying to His Church, "You have to do it. You have to gather out My elect out of every nation under Heaven." To the Church in London He says, "Bring this people out of the bondage of sin." That terrible London with all its poverty, its drunkenness, its infidelity and licentiousness–you are to save it in

the name of the Lord Jesus. Its darkness is dense. You are to shine till it is enlightened. You have to save London. So do not back out of it.

"Oh," says one man, who lives down some street near this place, "Sir, I can hardly live in the street. It teems with illliving women." You have to save them. Passing a little shop as I did the other day, I saw written up in the window, "If any poor girl that wishes to lead a better life will only step inside she will find a friend." That is one of our dear members. I felt so pleased as I saw it. I should like to see such a notice in a great many windows. I would like to see you live among the wicked and put up in your windows, "If anybody wants a friend, there is one inside. Come in."

You are called to save them! They must not be lost. Somebody says, "What are you talking about, Mr. Spurgeon? We cannot save them." I am talking as God said, when He told Moses and Aaron that He gave them a charge to bring His people out of Egypt. They could not do it–but yet they did it. Anyone can do what he can do but it is only God's servant that can do what he cannot do. We, my Brethren, are called to perform the impossible. We are to be familiar with miracles.

Look at Ezekiel. There is a valley full of dry bones. Ezekiel is to go and say to them, "Thus says the Lord, you dry bones, live." What a preposterous thing! An able Divine of good repute once said that to preach the Gospel to dead sinners was as preposterous

as to wave a pocket-handkerchief over a grave. Ah, just so! Therefore, I would not have him do it. If the Lord has not sent him to do it he would do no good if he were to attempt to preach to the sinner dead in sin. But it is a different thing when it is my case, for I feel that I am sent to do it and therefore I am not vexed at being thought to be acting absurdly.

If God had sent me to wave a pocket-handkerchief over the dead in Nunhead Cemetery that they might live, I would go and wave that pocket-handkerchief, and they would live. To the eye of reason there is no use in preaching to men dead in sin. I freely admit that. But if it is a commission from God, then it is not ours to raise questions but to do as we are bid. God has commissioned His servants to preach the Gospel to every creature. Whatever those creatures may be, we are to say to them, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned." This is our message and our mission and we are just to tell the Truth of God and leave God to apply it to the heart.

Oh that He may give us Divine Grace to tell the Gospel and to keep on doing it till He has brought His own elect out of the bondage of sin and Satan and saved them with an everlasting salvation!

Once more–as I told you in the reading, I greatly admire this chapter. I cannot help admiring the next thing that God did when He told His servant what to do. The Lord began to count the heads

of those whom He would redeem out of bondage. You see the rest of the chapter is occupied with the children of Reuben and the children of Simeon and the children of Levi. God seemed to say, "Pharaoh, let My people go!" "I will not," said the despot. Straightway the Lord goes right down into the brick-town where the poor slaves are at work and he makes out a list of all of them, to show that He means to set them free.

So many there of Simeon. So many here of Reuben. So many here of Levi. The Lord is counting them. Moreover He numbers their cattle, for He declares, "There shall not a hoof be left behind." Men say, "It is of no use counting your chickens before they are hatched." But when it comes to God's counting those whom He means to deliver, it is another matter. For He knows what will be done, because He determines to do it and He is almighty. He knows what is to come of the Gospel and He knows whom He means to bless. And so let Satan rage and let adversaries do what they will, "The foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, the Lord knows them that are His."

And to prove this, He goes on writing down their names and taking an account of them. "They shall be Mine, says the Lord, in that day when I make up My jewels." Now, my Hearers, if you do not come to Christ, it will be your own loss and not His. If you refuse Him, it will be because you are not Christ's sheep. As He

said to you, He has a people and He will save them, whether you, my Hearer, believe in Jesus or willfully refuse to do so.

Out of the mass of mankind a company shall come to Him and shall glorify His name, as it is written, “This people have I formed for Myself. They shall show forth My praise.” Oh, that you had such a mind in you that you would accept His Gospel! Will you do so even now? Trust Christ and you are saved. Look unto Him and be saved. The Lord bless you, for His name’s sake. Amen.