

**SERMONS FROM THE
PENNY PULPIT - PART 2**

**SERMONS PREACHED DURING THE
GREAT REVIVALS IN LONDON**

BY

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CONTENTS

1. The Christian's Rule of Life	3
2. Seeking Honour From Men	12
3. Hardening the Heart	20
4. The Conversion of Children	30
5. Christ Appearing Among His People	39
6. The Infinite Worth of the Soul	47
7. Purity of Heart and Life	56
8. The Sinner's Self-Condernnation	64
9. Refuges of Lies	69
10. The Spirit Ceasing to Strive	77
11. A Public Profession of Christ	85
12. The Whole Counsel of God	94
13. The Certain Doom of the Impenitent	106
14. The Awful Ingratitude of the Sinner	113
15. "Not Far From the Kingdom of God"	121
16. Quenching the Spirit	131
17. Little Sins	141
18. The Sinners Self-Destruction	149
19. The Rationality of Faith	158
20. The Reward of Fervent Prayer	165
21. Acceptable Prayer	174

1. THE CHRISTIAN'S RULE OF LIFE

“Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” - 1 Corinthians 10:31

In speaking from these words, I propose briefly to show -

I. That the character of God is of infinite value

II. What it is to live to do all for his glory

III. Notice some illustrations of this rule

IV. Examine some things in the life of Jesus in the light of this rule

I. THE CHARACTER OF GOD IS OF INFINITE VALUE

God, as a moral agent, must have a conscience, and it is of infinite importance to Him that He should meet the demands of His conscience that His character and conduct should be in all respects what His conscience tells Him it ought to be. Of course, it is of infinite importance that He should meet the demands of His conscience, because His own happiness depends upon His approval of His own conduct and character. Just think. Suppose God did not wholly respect and approve of His own conduct and character! Suppose he should violate His own conscience - not that it ever will be so, but suppose that it were - of course the happiness of God would be destroyed, He would not glorify Himself, nor honour Himself in His own estimation; His character, therefore, is of infinite importance. Now, we all know the importance of self-respect. When we forfeit our own self-respect, we render ourselves wretched; when we have our own consciences against us we must of necessity become miserable. Persons are well aware that their own character is to themselves of very great importance in this respect. They find it impossible to be at peace when they sin; when they are living in such a manner as to be unable to approve themselves in their own consciences. Now, it is not too much to say, that for God to honour Himself in His own estimation, to meet the demands of His judgment in respect to what is best and right, and to satisfy the demands of His own infinite reason and conscience, is a matter of infinite moment to Himself. Then again, it is of the utmost importance in relation to the government of the universe. Suppose God's character were to suffer in the estimation of the universe? The stability of his government depends upon the confidence of His subjects as subjects, of a moral government. The well-being and safety of the universe depend, I say, on the confidence reposed by the subjects of God in his sovereignty. Let their confidence in his character be forfeited, and what would be the result? Of course, it would unhinge his government and ruin the universe. Indeed, confidence in God is the great hinge upon which all obedience turns. Destroy confidence in God, and you destroy the happiness of the entire universe. Confidence in God, therefore, is just as important as the happiness of the universe. But I will not enlarge on this.

II. WHAT IS INTENDED BY LIVING TO THE GLORY OF GOD

The term “glory,” as it is here used, means renown, reputation. To do everything to the glory of God, is to have this end in view in all that we do; whether we eat or drink or

whatsoever we do, 'this to be done for the glory of God: to secure the universal respect and confidence of his subjects; to do those things that shall set his character in the strongest and most attractive light, and that shall lead men thoroughly to understand and appreciate His character; and thus endeavour to win for God the confidence and the hearts of all of his subjects. It is the same thing as to win souls; to endeavour in all our ways to win souls to God, to win souls to Christ, by showing forth the character of Christ in our example, in our tempers, in our spirit, and in all that we do. It is to be our chief aim to set forth His will, His law, and His whole government as perfect, and to make it so lovely and desirable as to draw the hearts of men to Himself, to confide in Him, to love Him, and to obey Him. I repeat, that to do whatever we do to glorify God is to have this great end in view in all our ways, to make ourselves living mirrors reflecting the image of God. Suppose a man should come from America to England, and profess to be a devoted friend of the American Government, but should totally misrepresent it in all that he did. If instead of representing the true spirit of the government - the true Republican spirit - he should himself be a despot in his spirit and character, and in every respect quite contrary to the real spirit of the American Government, and did not that, in any of his actions, which would truly represent it, what should we say of him? Now, suppose an individual should profess to be a disciple of Christ, should profess to love and obey his government, and to respect and revere his character, and yet he himself in all his ways misrepresented the character of God; that in his spirit and temper, and in his general deportment, he should hold forth a false light, and create a false impression of what the character and government of God really are, what should we say of such professors? Now, suppose a citizen of this country should go forth among the savage tribes of Africa, or any other part of the world, with the avowed object of recommending to them a species of government which, in his estimation, would secure their well-being, if adopted by them. Now, suppose he should profess great admiration of the British Government, but in all his ways and actions should misrepresent it; what would be the effect? Would not the savages think that any governmental constitution was better than such a hideous monster? But, suppose this individual was really sincere and benevolent, suppose that he really felt and believed that the British Constitution would greatly conduce to their well-being, of course he would by all his conduct endeavour to recommend the government; he would seek to show in his own person what kind of a man such a government was calculated to make; his aim would be in all things that he did to recommend the government to the people; he would always have this in view in everything that he either did or said; in all his ways, and by all his actions, he would seek to recommend the government of his country so as to induce those among whom he sojourned to adopt it. Apply this to the government of God. Suppose that those who profess to be the subjects of God's government manifest anything else than the true spirit of that government? For example, suppose, that - instead of showing that they are universally benevolent, and thus exhibit the law of God in it's true spirit, they should manifest a selfish spirit - who does not see that such persons would greatly and grievously misrepresent the true spirit and nature of the character of God's government? But suppose in all things an individual makes his whole life a mirror that shall reflect the pure character of God - the self-denial of Christ, the love of the Father, the purity and excellency of His law, and the perfection of His Government, and thus secure the glory of God, by living a life of universal peace and holiness. I pass now, in the next place, briefly to notice - and as I am so exceedingly hoarse, I must be very

brief; perhaps I shall not make myself understood; I will try, and you may expect nothing more of me -

III. SOME ILLUSTRATIONS OF THIS RULE

Observe, we have here a simple and plain rule of life, by which we are enabled to judge correctly of what is, and what is not our duty. The Bible always lays down great and broad principles. Instead of condescending to specify every form of duty, it lays down great principles to be followed out in practice. These principles are sometimes expressed in one form and sometimes in another; but they always amount to the same result in whatever way they are expressed. For example, the same principle is involved in the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength," that we have in the text, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." My object, beloved, is to set before those who profess to be converts, in as simple and as clear a manner as I can, a rule that they will do well always to remember, and by a reference to which they will, almost in all cases, be able to judge easily and correctly of all forms of duty, and whether any course of action is inconsistent, or not, with the Christian religion. If you are a Christian, you desire in all your ways to honour God. Of course you wish to awaken souls and bring them to him, to magnify His law, and to secure for Him the universal confidence of all moral agents everywhere. Now, the life and conduct of Christ was a simple illustration of this rule; whatever He did, He had this one great end in view. His aim, He said, was not to seek his own glory, but the honour and glory of God - that is, considered as the governor of the universe. The aim of Christ was to honour the Father considered in the relation of law-giver and governor; so to make men know Him, and rightly to understand and appreciate his government - in all His ways he manifested a deep desire to show forth, in His spirit and temper, and in His whole life, the true character of God. I speak of Christ thus not only as a man, but a man endowed with a divine nature.

Now, mark! his object was most thoroughly, and correctly, in all things to honour God, by making a fair, full, and thorough representation and reflection of God, in His own life and preaching, that He might show forth the character of God before the world, in order that he might prevail upon men to admire and imitate, and give themselves up to love and serve God. And let me say, the same was manifestly true of the Apostles. They caught the same spirit, and they laboured for the same great end. Their object everywhere was not to glorify themselves, but to honour God, to glorify Him, and to publish abroad His glory and His praise, and get for Him renown, and to obtain for Him the confidence of all men.

But let me say again: The same rule we see shines most beautifully in the primitive saints and martyrs. And the same rule is applicable to all ministers, lay men and women, and every person in every rank of life now; the disposition of all Christian persons should be to commend God's government and character to the world - in all things to set forth the religion of Jesus Christ, the religion of the Bible, and so to exhibit it before the world, that men seeing their good works shall be constrained to glorify God. Christ has said, "Ye are the light of the world:" "Ye are the salt of the earth." "So let your light shine before men that they seeing your good works shall glorify your Father which is in heaven." You profess to be the subjects of God's government, the disciples of Jesus; then in all your conduct, manifest his spirit, let your

light shine so as to cause God to be glorified; and do not misrepresent religion, do not falsify the character of God and the benevolence of His government. The apostle said, "For me to live is Christ." Do you live so as to be able to say this? Let your object be in living among men to seek to image forth Christ in all your conduct; to represent Christ among men as if there were a new edition of Jesus living in you; as if Christ was again appearing among men; showing himself through your temper, and spirit, and your whole life. But let me say again: Let it be understood, then, that this rule is one of universal application. It is binding on all Christian men in all places and at all times. You are to glorify God in the week as well as on the Sabbath; in your business as well as in your prayers. If you fail to glorify God in your business transactions, you will dishonour Him in your prayers; if you appear at the communion table, at the prayer meeting, at the service of the sanctuary - everything you do at any or all of these places is dishonourable to Christ, if in your daily life, in your dealings with worldly men, you are doing nothing to honour Christ! I say that on all the days of the week as well as on the Sabbath, you are to honour God - in your business as much as in your prayers; and in your ordinary meals, you ought as truly to honour God as at the Lord's table. To be sure, the Lord's Supper is to commemorate the Lord's death, but whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, you are to do all to the glory of God. You are to show that you are not "a man given to appetite," in such sense that you live to eat instead of eat to live, in order that you may do the work of God. But I can not enlarge upon this principle which you see so clearly brought out in the text. The meaning of all this is, that all our lives should be devotional, that we should ever, by our lives, and in all our ways, be devoted to God - everything that we do is to be service rendered to God. Now, suppose, that you are living by this rule, that you really intend to live to God, of course you will seek to glorify Him in your eating and drinking, you will not eat food merely to gratify your own appetite, but that you may have strength to glorify God. Of course it will be so as to the things you eat, and the quantity you eat. Of course, you will not make "provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof;" but your appetite will be subservient to God - you will have His glory in view, and not merely your own personal gratification, in eating and drinking. So in everything else, you will show to the world that you have a higher end in view than merely your own personal gratification, and that you are living to honour and glorify God.

IV. THINGS IN THE LIFE OF JESUS IN THE LIGHT OF THIS RULE

And first, under this head, I would say, it is not enough that a thing may be done for the glory of God, but the question is, is it in fact done to glorify God? Now, you may do many things, beloved, that might very reasonably be done for the glory of God that are not. An illustration of this fact occurs to me at this moment. Several years since, I was labouring in one of the towns of America, during a revival of religion, where there lived a very singular woman, who contended that it was very proper for Christians to have balls and to dance; and this position she defended most strongly. She adduced the fact of David's "dancing before the ark with all his might." Now, David did it as a religious service, and I asked her, "Do you actually perform dancing as a religious service? Do you do it to glorify God? Do you mean it as an act of worship? Do you mean it, as David meant it, to honour God and show his holy joy and holy zeal when the ark of God was coming into the city? Now, do you do it for that reason? Do you recommend it as a part of religious service? If you do, why then say so; but, if you

don't mean to recommend it as a religious service, what do you mean by it's being lawful?" Now, the fact is, things may be done to glorify God, that in fact are not done for that object. I can conceive of a man being so full of holy joy as to dance to glorify God as David did; but, this would not prove that all dancing is performed for the same end, nor will it prove that dancing is right, except for this reason. I mention dancing rather than anything else, simply because the fact that I have just related occurred to me at the moment. It is not enough, I say again, that a thing may possibly be done to glorify God, but it really must be done for that reason. Men must glorify God in all that they do, or they do not obey him.

But I remark, secondly, under this head: We can not aim to glorify God by any means that are manifestly discreditable to God. For example, suppose a pirate ship should be fitted out for the avowed object of getting money for the Bible Society? Suppose this vessel went out into the open seas with the black flag and cross-bones, making war upon all the ships that passed where it was, destroying their crews and stealing their freights, and all this for the purpose of getting money for the Bible Society. Who does not see that this would shock the common sense of mankind, who by a necessary law of their own natures would know that such a thing could not be done for the glory of God. Such a thing would be repugnant to the feelings and hearts of all men, and everybody would see that the very pretence was a gross absurdity. Suppose a slave ship should be fitted out to go down to the coast of Africa for slaves, that they might be taken to the West Indies or to the southern part of the United States, under the pretence of getting money for the Missionary Society. The convictions of all moral agents would be that this was sheer blasphemy! There are things, then, that can not be done to glorify God - that the universal mind of all moral agents agree to declare can not be done to glorify Him. It is a remarkable fact that there are certain fundamental affirmations that belong to moral agents, as such, that they will agree in affirming to be true. I have just mentioned two - the slave ship and the pirate ship, pretending to be engaged in religious pursuits. On such matters, reason is out of place - it is a necessary conviction of the mind of men universally, that murder and robbery can not be perpetrated to glorify God.

There are a great many other things in the same category. Suppose, for example, that anything which is injurious to society should be got up, with a professedly religious purpose, that right on the face of it shows itself calculated to ruin the bodies and souls of men, but it is got up for the sake of doing good, and bringing glory to God. Now, who does not see that it is hypocrisy to pretend anything of this sort? Could any person bring himself to believe that he was glorifying God, for example, by engaging in any branch of business that is right in the face of society, calculated to injure both the bodies and souls of men? Suppose an individual should keep a house of ill-fame, under pretence that the avail was to be given to the Church! Who would not say that such a pretence was most blasphemous? But let me say, there are multitudes of things that, on the very face of them, misrepresent the benevolence of God, that are done on the pretence of honouring God! Now, this is a downright shame! Now, let me ask, can anybody pretend to represent the benevolence of God by any of the things that I have named? No indeed! But again; take many of the ways of making money in the present day, by speculating, and by over-reaching. Money is made by this means, and sometimes under the pretence that part of it is to be given to the glory of God! Away with such money! Away with such pretensions! Who does not know that it is an

abomination in the sight of God? Is it not revolting to every feeling of humanity to reflect that men should beat their slaves to make them earn that which they pretend they are about to devote to pious purposes; that, that which is got by the sweat and blood of men is to be paid into the treasury of the Lord? Away with it; it is an abomination unto the Lord! But let me say again; you ought never to do anything that Christ plainly would not have done. Now, there are certain things, for example, that by a law of our own being we affirm Christ would not do. There is a sure guiding principle that lies deep in the mind of man, that affirms things in which men will agree. For instance, every moral agent will affirm that Christ would not give Himself up to be a pirate. Who believes that He would? He would not give Himself up to pursue any kind of business that would ruin the bodies or souls of men! Who believes that He would? Do you suppose that for the sake of getting money to spread the gospel, He would resort to some of the means that are resorted to in these days? Now, let me say - the Lord does not want people to get money for Him by grinding the faces of the poor. That a man for the sake of selling his goods cheap, and to get money for the cause of God, should screw-down the people in his employ, and give them such a pittance as will hardly keep body and soul together! Do you think Christ would do that? Would He shave and cut down the honest earnings of a poor woman for the sake of getting money to diffuse the gospel? No indeed! God is not so poor that He can not get money without your serving the devil in that way!

I am so very hoarse tonight, or I intended to take up this question of trade fully, and put the knife of truth into it, but I must forbear. But let me say again: Very often persons get up fairs, or parties, and even balls, for the sake of getting money for God, as they say. Some years ago, while labouring in a certain place in America, the Unitarians got up a ball of this kind, that was to last for two days. Each gentleman paid two pounds for attending the ball, the proceeds of which were to be given to the poor - in fact, to supply them with fuel, for it was very cold weather. Now, many people who professed to dislike such things in a general way, went to the ball, because it was "a charity ball!" Now, why, if they were benevolent, could they not at once give the two pounds to the poor? Why go to feast and ball, serving the devil for two days, and then give only the residue to the poor? Was not this merely an apology for charity? Yes, and nothing else! Some of the Orthodox people, who did not like balls, and would not go so far as that, got up some parties - "charity parties" as they called them - and there they got together and had a fine time of it - had everything that was rich and nice - and concluded with prayer! Why conclude with prayers? Because they got the ministers in to sanction and share in their proceedings. And, then, the residue of the proceeds of these parties was given to the poor! Do you think Christ would have acted thus? Young convert, how does it strike you? Was that benevolence? What think you of having a night of merriment, and calling it "a charity party," laughing and talking and going on, and then sanctifying the whole with prayer? Well now, I might mention a great multitude of things that are done under the pretence of benevolence. Some of you perhaps, may have been drawn into some of these things. I have known theatres to give "benefits" for the poor, and have thus drawn in professors of religion who did not object to go because it was "a benefit for the poor." Why not give your money at once? Why run to the theatre? Oh, what a miserable subterfuge is all this! I trust you will in future have your eyes open. Ask yourselves, when you are requested, or tempted, to do anything - would Jesus Christ do that?

But again: Speculation can not be engaged in for the glory of God. By speculation, I mean this - there are multitudes of individuals who will give themselves to get money by making great bargains out of their fellow-men, under the pretence that they are going to get rich in order that they may give money to the cause of God. Now, it is manifestly wrong for a man thus to overreach his fellow-men, that he may make a great bargain, and thus be able to give something to God. Such a man says to God, "O God, I have made this speculation out of that man, and now I will give part of it to thee." Now, is this one of the ways in which a man can honestly attempt to glorify God? No indeed! God does not require that a man should be unjust to his fellow-men, in order to give money for the advancement of his cause on the earth. I am not speaking of those persons who are engaged in what may be termed lawful speculations; but of those who drive hard bargains, professedly for the glory of God. Now, there is altogether a mistake in this; they don't do it, for this reason. The very nature of man can not assent to this. To wrong a neighbour to give to God can not possibly please God. God loves all men; there is an important sense in which all men are his children, and God will not see injustice done even to the wickedest of men. You have no right to act unjustly to a wicked man. No indeed! God will not consent to it.

But, again: let me relate a fact I believe I mentioned it in this place once before; it may be well to mention it again; however, as it will illustrate what I mean. About the year 1831, an individual possessing large property professed to be converted, and he said that he had resolved to give up all his property to God, for His glory and the advancement of His religion; he had no family, and therefore did not want it. He spent several years in looking about him to see what object he should give it to, but he could see no object worthy of it - he always saw something in every society which, he said, conscientiously prevented his parting with his money to it. His property in the meantime, went on accumulating. By and by, he began to speculate in provisions, and he went through to the great thoroughfare of the West and bought up everything that he could in the shape of provisions in order that he might sell them out again at an extravagant price. But it so happened that he did not get hold of enough to carry his speculation; he did not become possessed of sufficient to control the market, and therefore, lost all he had. He came to my house soon after, and seeing he looked very said, I asked the cause. "Why," said he, "all my store is gone." "I am glad of it," said I, "for you never intended to give it to God." I felt sure of this, although he had told me what he intended to do with the money if the speculation succeeded. "You wanted," said I, "to make the poor man sweat and toil to pay an extravagant price for his food, and you tell me that the object you had in doing this was, that you might serve God with the money! You gave yourself to speculate for God, did you? I don't believe you thought so. You were selfish in it." You may judge how the conversation affected him. "Now," said I to him, "I can't believe this; it is not in human nature to believe it, it is contrary to the laws of moral agents. Neither will God have money so gotten."

Let this illustrate what I mean, beloved; never think, then, that you can glorify God in engaging in anything that Christ would not have engaged in. Ask yourselves, would Christ do that? Should I be shocked to see him do it? If you would be shocked to see Him do it, if you would be stunned and confounded to see Him do it, then don't do it yourselves. But, let me say once more, I might advert here, if I have time and strength, to a great many things which pass currently among men, which they profess to be

doing religiously, but which can not be done religiously; but I can not now enlarge upon them.

I must now conclude with a few remarks. First, nothing short of living in conformity with this rule is true religion. That is, when you do not live with this in your view, you have not a single eye; even if you have been converted, you are not now a child of God unless you are living according to this rule. If you do not glorify God in everything, you are fallen into sin.

Again: This is always a good rule for young converts, especially when any question comes before the mind, and you are unable to decide what you ought to do, just ask yourself this question; would Christ do this? Might I expect to find Christ at that party? Would an apostle suffer himself to be there? Can I do anything for Christ there? Can I speak a word for Christ, or will it be considered entirely out of place to talk about religion; or if I should manifest a Christian spirit there, would it not be considered out of place? Would it shock the company that I should pretend to have any religion? If so, it is manifestly not the place for religious people a place - where Christ is not, and religion is an intrusion.

But again: Many persons will sometimes go to such places, but to save their characters, they will introduce religion in some way or other, perhaps to give offense; just to save their characters, they will introduce Christ, but only to be rejected and despised.

Again: Never go into any company without seeking to glorify Christ, and where you do not go for that object. Jesus, you know, went to dine with the Pharisees, but it was with a view to rebuke, and instruct, or to correct their religious errors. Again: Do not fall into this mistake - do not go for some other reason, and finally cover your retreat by sanctifying it with prayer and the reading of the Scriptures. Now, persons will sometimes go to places where they don't expect to do any good; they don't go for that object, but after they have had their pleasures and feastings, they will cover their retreat by prayer. Now, beloved, always remember to do whatever you do to honour God.

But let me say again: This is one of the most simple and natural rules of life for men whose hearts are right with God. When the heart is in a right state, it is as natural as to breathe, to have reference to Christ in everything that you do. Again: If men would regard this rule, their business transactions would not be a snare to them. Business was not designed to be a snare to any man; and if men will but transact business for God, they will be as religious in their business as they are on the Sabbath. Observe, you may be as truly spiritual-minded behind your counters as in your closets. Spiritual-mindedness is devoting everything to God, making everything over to Him, and living for His honour and glory. Now men ought to be just as spiritual-minded in their business as in their prayers; and if they are not in their business, they are not in their prayers. Mind that! If you are not devoted to God during the week, you are not on the Sabbath, and you deceive yourself if you think you are. You can not serve yourself in the week and God on the Sabbath. Not you! The fact is, you will have the same end in view on the Sabbath as in the week. If you are selfish in the week, you will be selfish on the Sabbath. If you are not religious in your business, you will not be religious in anything. This is the fact. For what end are you doing business? What object have you

in view? What do you live for? This is the great question. It should always be understood, then, that men are in reality no more religious on the Sabbath than they are in the week. They are not more truly religious, in their prayers than they are in their workshops. If they are religious in the one, they are in the other. Let no man think that he honours God on the Sabbath if he does not serve God on the other days of the week. It is well to be in the sanctuary on the Sabbath, and on all proper occasions; this duty should not be left undone, and let your devotion to God's house be seen and acknowledged; but be sure to let the world see in your business that you are a servant of God; let this be known in all your ways, in all your expenditure, in all your dress, in all your equipage; you must be the servant of God in every little thing, or be the servant of God in nothing.

Now, let me say, it will not be considered extravagant if I state that there is a very great mistake among the mass of professors of religion in this particular. There is a great affection of sanctity on the Sabbath, with many who have no piety at home, and in their business transactions. See a man in the house of God on the Sabbath who appears very devout, and you wish to know whether he is really so, go and do business with him on the Monday, and you will soon find out what he really is. Ah, you can say, I have done business with that man; I could not tell what he was when he was in the chapel, but I have seen him in his own house, in his shop, and I see that he is a man of God there; I saw him dealing with the hired men and women in his employ, and I have learned it all. Now mark, he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. That is the Bible doctrine. He that would cheat you of a penny would cheat you of a thousand pounds, if he could do it without injury to his business character. A man that does not regard God's glory in everything, does not regard it in anything! But I must not continue this strain of remark. Beloved, I designed simply in my remarks tonight to lay down a great principle of religion, the great rule of life. I have done so. Now, let me ask, will you consent to live by this rule? Young convert, do you now see how you can honour or dishonour religion? Do you see how much good or how much evil you can do? Do you know how much the character of revivals of religion depends upon you living in everything to glorify God? Live therefore, close to God; "whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." Whatever you think will really honour God, that do. Whatever, in your solemn judgment and by the light of the Scriptures, and the example of Jesus Christ, you think will be honourable to God, that do; do it for that reason, and the blessing and peace of God shall be with you.

I am not now preaching on the Atonement - my text did not lead me. I am not now preaching on Baptism - my text did not lead me. I am not now preaching about Election - my text did not lead me. I have been preaching about living to the glory of God! And have been urging you, beloved, to live to the glory of God. Will you do it? Perhaps I ought to say I shall, in all probability, see the faces of many of you no more until we meet in judgment. I shall make no appeal to your feelings in respect of meeting me there; but I would remind you that both you and I will soon have to meet God! Let us study to approve ourselves to Him, let men say what they will. Amen.

2. SEEKING HONOUR FROM MEN

“How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” - John 5:44

The question of the text is equivalent to a strong assertion, that while individuals receive honour from men rather than from God, they can not believe. This is a very common way of speaking. When we wish to express a very strong negative, we throw our remarks into the form of a question, as in the text - “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?” which is equivalent to saying, you can by no means believe while you do this.

In speaking from these words, I propose to show -

I. What faith is not

II. What it is

III. What is implied in it

IV. What is intended by receiving honour from men

V. That this state of mind, that seeks honour from men, renders faith impossible

I. WHAT FAITH IS NOT

There is scarcely any word in the Bible more common than the word Faith, few things are said more about in the Bible as important to be considered; the greatest stress is laid upon it everywhere; it is always put forth as of the greatest importance; and yet, strange to tell, there is scarcely any word in the Bible, perhaps, about which such loose and vague ideas have existed among mankind. A great many individuals have used the word without really understanding what they themselves meant by it; much less have they understood, in many cases, what the Spirit of God means by the word. If there be anything of importance in the Scriptures for us to understand, it is that we should conceive rightly of the full import of this term. To be sure, there are other terms which, perhaps, are just as important, such as Love and Repentance. Now, it is of the greatest importance that we should have the most distinct ideas of what these terms mean, for, observe, they are all designed to express a state of mind. What is this state of mind? Now, the Holy Scriptures treatment of the states of mind indicated by these terms. The Scriptures, from beginning to end, are always using language which is designed to represent certain states of mind; sometimes it refers to the mind of God, sometimes to the minds of saints, and sometimes to the state of mind in which sinners are. Sin is nothing else but a state of mind; and holiness is nothing else but a state of mind; so that, unless you understand what these terms mean and what particular states of mind they are designed to represent, you will never understand anything about religion. Hence, when I speak on the subject of faith, I am in the habit of trying to make myself understood and, if possible, to develop in my hearers what I suppose to be the true idea represented by the term, and also what is not the meaning of the word.

Before I proceed to define the meaning of the term Faith, I would just remark that every man, by his own consciousness, knows that there are three distinct operations of his mind - his intellect which thinks, his sensibility which feels, and his will which acts. Now, these three faculties every man is conscious of possessing, and is conscious of exercising those three classes of action. He is conscious of thinking and reasoning; he is conscious of willing to put forth action - to do certain things in preference to others; he is also conscious of feeling; he knows that he has sensibility which can feel, and have desires and emotions of various classes and kinds. Every man knows, moreover, that oftentimes his thoughts and intellectual affirmations are unavoidable - that he is not voluntary in them.

For instance, every man knows this; and he affirms, without any hesitation, that a thing can not be and yet be at the same time. Every man, also, is perfectly conscious that the whole of a thing is equal to all its parts, and that he can not possibly affirm the opposite of this, or go beyond this. Every man knows that he is irresistibly compelled, under certain circumstances, to make such and such affirmations. The same is true of the feelings. Every man knows that he must feel in a certain manner, and can not possibly feel otherwise; for example, if he puts his hand into the fire and burns himself, he will feel the smart - it is irresistible. So you may suppose that, under certain other circumstances, he will have various feelings and emotions which he can not possibly avoid because they are wholly involuntary. But every man knows just as well, and comes by his knowledge in precisely the same way - by his own consciousness - that it is not so with his will, but that, on the contrary, his will is perfectly free. A man wills a thing in one direction or another, and acts as he wills; he may will to go to meeting or to sit at home, to go about his business, or to refrain from going about his business; every man knows with the same certainty, and in the same way, that his will is free as that he exists. Now, suppose that any one in this house were really practically to call in question whether his will is free, whether he is able to will to go in one direction or another. Suppose we should say to him, Do you calculate to go home when the meeting is concluded? "I don't know," he would say, "whether any such motives will be presented before me as will make me willing to go: I am not free, I can not will to go myself, and whether anything will take place to make me willing, I can't tell." Now, we say that every man assumes his own liberty; and if he was not free to act as he might, will, should there be a post in the street, he would be just as likely to run up against it, and be thrown down, as he would be to pass on either side of it. The truth is, no man practically does call in question the freedom of his will, and if a man ever does this in words, he does not know what he says. Every man knows that he is free as certainly as that he exists, and he bases almost everything that he does upon this assumption; if men were not free, they would do nothing of themselves any more than a machine can. These remarks being made, I proceed to show, 'what faith is not.' It is not thought, nor is it an affirmation, nor an intellectual perception, nor an intellectual conviction; the devil may have a faith of that sort - indeed, he has it; the Bible declares that; the devil believes, and his belief makes him tremble. It is only an intellectual conviction; we often find sinners deeply convinced, so that they tremble, but that is not faith. Faith, then, does not consist in believing simply with the intellect anything that God says - a man may believe it with his intellect, and yet have no faith. Let me say again, that faith is not mere feeling. Thoughts and feelings, as anyone knows, are in a sense involuntary; moral character does not attach directly to them; being involuntary, they are unconnected with actions of the will. We do not deny that persons are in a

sense responsible for their thoughts and their feelings, but mark - it is because their thoughts and their feelings are placed in such a relation to the will, that the will can in a certain sense modify or control them: man is responsible only for the actions of his will. This leads me to say that faith is also in the Bible represented as virtue - it is called a holy faith; it is represented as obedience to God. Again, faith must not only be voluntary, but it also implies, as a condition of its existence, that the intellect perceives something to be believed; faith always implies that there is something to be believed, and that which is to be believed must be recognised by the intellect. It is the intellect which sees, and the mind, when it puts forth an act of the will, chooses or rejects that which the mind sees. Faith, therefore, must imply the perception by the intellect of some truth, but merely this perception of truth however clear it stands out before the mind, with all the vividness and brightness of a living reality - if it goes no further, it is not faith; and the clearer the conviction of an unbelieving man, the greater will be his agony of mind - that is the reason why an unbelieving conviction disturbs the guilty and makes them tremble. The clearer, I say, the intellect sees when the mind does not believe, and when the heart does not yield to the truth, the more intense is the agony of that mind, when these truths relate to God, and His relations to eternal things.

II. LET US CONSIDER WHAT FAITH IS

First, that which constitutes the faith of the gospel is the heart or the will committing itself to the truth which the intellect perceives - yielding the whole will up to it, so as to be influenced by it. Observe, then, there are properly in faith the following things - First, there is an intellectual perception, a realising that the thing is true; then there is the mind committing itself to the truth, or embracing it, or yielding itself up to the truth, to be moulded and governed by it. It is in fact, the mind's coming into sympathy with, and partly yielding itself up to, and embracing the truth so perceived. Let me illustrate this if I can. Sometimes you see persons convinced of a thing they do not will to be convinced of for some reason or other. It is often found that when certain truths are pressed upon an individual, he is unwilling to believe. For example, there is a man who has a sick wife; he sees that she is pale and haggard, he perceives her sunken cheek, and hears her hollow cough, and he fears that she may be in a consumption; he is unwilling, however, to believe it, and tries to flatter himself that her lungs are not affected, and perhaps the doctor tells him that it is a nervous complaint and not a consumption. But day after day he sees the hectic flush of the face and the clear and burning eye, and all the other symptoms of consumption. By-and-bye the physician says, "I must give her up, she is in a consumption; I am satisfied that she can live but a little while." Now, mark! Suppose the man does not recognise the hand of God in this event; he now sees the naked reality, it stands out plainly before him; in a few days or weeks he will be without a wife, and his children without a mother - ah, what an agony that is; he has not such confidence in God as to be able to see the hand of God in the affliction; he has no such confidence that he can yield up his little ones without any misgiving to his heavenly Father. The reality has at length come upon him; his intellect must yield; his wife must die; his children must be left without a mother; and he himself must go about alone. But to all this his will does not consent; he is dissatisfied with the order of providence; he is disposed to murmur, and is in agony when he realises the fact that his wife must die. If you tell him that in all this, God is acting wisely, his intellect will admit that all the actions of God are both wise and good, but his heart does not admit it, his will does not receive it. See the difference between faith and a

mere intellectual conviction. Take the Bible and show him the promises of God, bring before him evidences of the goodness of God, of the universal care that God exercises over all his creation; "I know it!" he says, "I know it!" but how he agonises and smarts under it. But he becomes a converted man. You left him last night in the greatest distress; but you see him this morning, and he meets you with a smile. You ask after his welfare? - Oh, he never was better. You inquire how his wife is? - Oh, the Lord is going to take her home. There is a great change. He says now, "I have no wish nor desire but that God's perfect will should be done." He can now embrace the fact with his heart; he sees in it the hand of his Father and Saviour; he can yield up his mind to the dispensation without a murmur. Now, this is faith in the particular providence of God.

Now, let us see what faith in Christ is! Faith in Christ is the mind yielding itself up to Him and implies, first a conviction of sin. That is, the mind apprehends itself to be a sinner. It implies also that the mind is convinced that Jesus Christ died for sinners; it also implies that the mind assents and consents to the understood relation of Christ to man as a Saviour, in that He died to save him. But look at that man, what ails him? Why, he has a clear conviction that he is a sinner, but his will does not yield, and he is wretched; and the clearer his conviction is of the truth, the more miserable does he become. The Bible tells him to believe - he says, "I do believe," yet he finds no comfort in it. He is told to pray; he says he does pray, and pray in faith; but does he receive answers to his prayers? No! The fact is, he knows intellectually about these things, but his heart does not yield and come into sympathy with them so as to embrace these truths, and he is often in agony when he thinks about them. All at once, some thought passes in his mind about Christ and salvation, when he instantly yields his will and heart to the truth, and his soul becomes like to the chariot of Aminadab! He finds himself in sympathy with the truth; and he wholly gives up his heart to embrace it. The truth does not distress him now as it did before. He has set his heart on the truths of the Gospel now; he sees a glorious reality in them, and they set upon the soul with such sweetness, that he feels it to be the element in which it was designed to "live, move, and have it's being;" - all is joy and peace.

III. SOME OF THE THINGS THAT ARE IMPLIED IN BELIEVING IN JESUS

First, of course, it implies a supreme regard to His will, a committing of the mind to Him, and a yielding up of the whole life to live in sympathy with these truths that respect Him. Furthermore, it implies a forsaking of everything that is inconsistent with the will of Christ. We can not love Him and yet, at the same time, sympathise with His enemies. Again, it implies a supreme regard to what He does or wills respecting us. For example, an individual who really believes in Christ, has a supreme regard to his good opinion, and is desirous to please Him; and is infinitely more desirous to have the approbation of Christ than the approbation of the world - infinitely more. Believing in Christ, then, implies a supreme desire to please Him; a state of mind that will say whatever will please Him; that will do, and that will aim to please Him, regarding any token whatever of his approbation as being infinitely more valuable than the approbation of all the creatures in the universe. Of course, it implies that there must be no such regard for the opinions or admiration of men, as at all to interfere with the mind's supreme love to, and confidence in God, and the opinion and approbation of

Jesus Christ. Of course, if this is so, it implies a change of life - a change in respect to the great end for which men live. Instead of living to themselves, they live to Christ; instead of living to please men, they live to please God; instead of regarding men, they regard Christ; and it is but a small thing with them what men may think of them.

IV. WHAT IT IS TO RECEIVE HONOUR OF MEN

“How can ye believe which receive honour of men, and seek not that honour which cometh from God only?” First, it implies a disposition to be honoured by them. To “receive” honour from men, implies that the mind embraces it, and comes into sympathy with it. Now, a man may be honoured by his fellow-men, without being said to receive that honour in the sense here meant, or any sense that implies anything wrong. He may not seek it; and he may regard it as of no such importance as to sacrifice any principle of right and truth to it. To “receive” it, then, in the sense of the text, implies that the mind has such a regard to the public sentiment, or the opinion, good will, and favour of men in some particular thing, more than the opinion and favour of God. It implies a state of mind, in fact, that has no sympathy with God - a selfish state of mind that regards the approbation of men as a great thing, and that seeks to secure the favour and applause of men. That state of mind, I say, is selfish; it has the spirit of self-seeking in that particular form. For instance, some men seek money - that is the form in which their selfishness manifests itself; others seek power; others still, seek their own reputation among men - they aim to secure popularity, in order that they may control and rule; and such a regard have they for the praise of men, that they will not sacrifice it for the honour and approbation of Christ.

V. THIS STATE OF MIND RENDERS FAITH IMPOSSIBLE

This is plainly stated in the text. Christ does not mean to say that we have no power to put away that selfish spirit and feeling, but that while we have that form of selfishness, we can not believe. Do you say, Why is faith impossible? “Why? Just because there is no fellowship between Christ and the world. “He that will be a friend of the world, is an enemy of God,” says the apostle. Again: Christ and the world have a spirit in complete opposition to each other. Again: There can not be any sympathy both with the world and with Christ. Again: If persons seek to please the world and to have it’s sympathy, favour, approbation, and good will, they are in a state of mind which is directly over against the state of mind that will please God, and secure the good will, approbation and favour of Christ. These two states of mind are exactly opposite. But mark! they are both voluntary states of mind. We can determine whether to love the world or to love God, whether to have the favour of the world or the favour of God; but we can not have both at once; we can not walk in two exactly opposite directions at the same time; we can not will supremely to love God, and yet supremely will to seek the applause and honour of man, at the same time. It is an absurdity to suppose such a thing possible. I have known individuals to have such a supreme regard to the opinions and approbation of an individual, as to be in perfect bondage to him; the approbation and favour of that individual was more regarded than the favour of all the world beside, or perhaps than Christ himself. Now, a man who is in that state of mind can not be in Christ: if he is in bondage to man, he can not have a supreme regard to the will of Christ.

It is easy to see the strength of the application of these words of Christ, as uttered to the Jews. It was extremely unpopular, you know, to believe in Christ when he was upon the earth - the whole current of public feeling and prejudice set strongly against Him; the religious teachers of that day being the foremost to oppose and denounce Him, and in seeking to prevent the people exercising faith in Him. "Now," said Christ, "how can you believe in me while you are inquiring all the time, 'Have any of the rulers believed on him?' and are so anxious to know how it will affect your reputation with men if you become my disciples? I know very well if you become my disciples what it will cost you, and I tell you plainly that if you have so much regard for those around you so as to seek their approbation and honours, you can not believe in me; if you come into sympathy with me, you must turn your back on them. You can not love me and the world too."

A few remarks must close what I have to say this morning. First, there are many persons in the state of mind indicated in the text. When the Gospel is presented to them, they are held back from accepting it and connecting themselves to it, by the opinion of some individual, public sentiment, or something else. There are men who sustain a certain relation to them, and they don't like to displease them. I have repeatedly known men sustain political relations, and commercial and business relations, with men to whom they were in complete bondage; they could not believe and accept the Gospel, but they would sacrifice the good opinion, or the friendship or favour, of this particular individual. Now, they could not believe the Gospel, because belief implies a tearing away from this unholy relation, and a giving up of everything that would hinder the individual obeying Christ. One man perhaps sustains a political relation to another who has interest and influence, and expects to get him elected into a certain office; you call upon him to believe, and he does not accept the invitation; his mind is closed against it, because his so doing would offend his patron. Another man sustains certain business relations to an individual who has the power of injuring his worldly interests, if his views are thwarted; the question about believing in Christ comes up, but he can not commit himself to Christ, till that man's opinion, views, and good will shall have been consulted. Perhaps some of you, who now hear me, are in this very predicament. Perhaps there is some garment of self-seeking in which the devil has bound your soul fast; that you are in bondage; that you have given yourself up to be influenced by some man or set of men. Now, let me ask, will you come right out and shake off this unholy garment? will you break this degrading yoke? and now that the Gospel is presented to you, say with all your hearts, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth;" it is a small thing for me to be judged of man's judgment; my God, let me have thine approbation, if all the world condemn me! It is God that justifieth, then who is he that condemneth?"

Let me remark again: My observation has led me to acknowledge of this fact - that political aspirants very seldom become truly pious. It is the most natural thing in the world that it should be so. Political ambition is among the greatest snares in the world, and the greatest hindrance to the reception of the Gospel. In popular governments, such as the United States, this is especially the case; you are there entirely surrounded by political ambition. I have watched it now for thirty years, and have marked the influence of political ambition on the minds of men. A man becomes politically ambitious, he tries to stand well with his party, and in a very little while he becomes a perfect slave to his party - as really as a Negro in the Southern States is a slave; and I

should ten thousand times sooner expect to be able to emancipate the negro, than the man who is politically ambitious! He has sold himself to his party. This is the case in the United States, and I suppose the same thing is true in England, that men who are politically ambitious have sold themselves to their party. But what will become of them. May we not ask, in reference to them, "How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not that honour which cometh from God only?" Let me tell you, my hearers, that if you are conscious of any influence which is keeping you from God, you must remove it, you must break it off; you must pluck out a right eye, if need be, and cut off a right hand! Some individuals who are in business, do not become religious lest they should offend their customers. In short, how many of these snares the devil has set, like gins and traps, at every corner of the street, and you find men falling into them on every hand, and when God's truth comes home to them, "How can they believe?"

Let me ask you, my dear hearers, if you don't know something of these facts in your own experience? How many of you can say, today, that there is no human influence, no fear of man, no regard to the good will or opinion of any living being, that holds you back from a whole-hearted consecration to God? How is it? Again: You can see from this subject why so many professors of religion have little or no faith. How can they believe if they regard the opinions of the world, instead of committing themselves to God, let men say what they will. A great many people fail to be saved because they regard public sentiment; they ask, "How will it affect my reputation?" How will it strike such and such an one?" Instead of asking, Lord, how will it please thee? If this is the character of any of you, my hearers, it is impossible for you to be saved. Let me say, once more; one of the greatest and most important steps that men can take, is to break away from this snare, and at once commit themselves to God, without regard to what any man, or set of men, may say; break right away from the fear of man, and regard only what God will think, what God wishes, and what will please Him, and at once commit their whole being to Him; this is a great and most important step for a man to take. Is this the step that you will take? Are you prepared to do it this morning? Doubtless, many of you know that you ought to do it, and therefore I need not occupy the time in telling you of your duty; but I ask, have you manhood enough to do it? Have you strength of character enough to do it, or are you so perfectly enfeebled, so perfectly weak that you can not? Have you been so long gone, so far in the other direction, that you can not make up your minds to do your duty, and commit yourselves to God? It is remarkable how such things enfeeble the mind in a certain sense. Look at that drunkard! watch him as he goes shuffling along the streets! He has been a "temperate drinker," as he called himself; then after a little, he became intemperate and eventually, he became so degraded and debased as to abhor himself, and everybody abhors him, and he is shunned even by his own family and friends; he has become a mere wretch! See how weak he is! Sometimes after he has have been intoxicated, and has come to his senses, he is ready to spit in his own face, if such a thing were possible - he abhors and despises himself; but set a cup of strong drink before him and you see his weakness; he is a perfect slave, he has sold himself, and he will drink it even if it be his eternal ruin! Many a man has, in a similar way, sold himself to ambition, and become a complete slave to the influence of certain men, or to the opinions of certain individuals. They dare not do anything without consulting them! They dare not take such a great and important step as to break off their sympathy with them, in order to enter into sympathy with God! They are so weak as to have lost all

self-reliance. You ask them to believe in Christ, and you give their consciences a twinge, but they slink away, as the drunkard quails before the cup; while he takes it up to drink its contents, he trembles and almost curses himself. And it may be the case with some of you, my hearers, that you are seeking honour from men and despising yourselves all the time. Let me ask, "Are you prepared to look God in the face?" Oh! if I knew your name, perhaps I might tell a tale - and nothing but the truth - that would make you blush, so that you dare not hold up your head, of something which has kept you from entering into sympathy with God, and committing yourself to Him; perhaps your wife could tell this tale, or others who may be intimately acquainted with you. I will tell you who can tell the tale - that conscience of yours can tell it! Or, perhaps it can not speak just now! Perhaps you have abused its claims time after time, so that now it takes a dignified and indignant position of silence, and says not a word. But it will speak by and by! It will tell the story presently! You may only hear the rumblings of conscience now, having smothered it so long, but it will speak by and by - a death bed is coming. Ah, but perhaps before that, conscience will assert its claim and reproach you with your folly. But let me ask, Will you turn now, and enter into sympathy with Christ, and believe in Him? When do you expect to be converted? Dear soul, do you ever expect to be converted? Do you ever expect to be, until you break with the world - until you come to cast off the regard of men, and regard God supremely? How is it? You must do it sometime, if you will be saved; when will you do it? Do you think a future time will be better? As reasonable and dying men, reflect! You will break off the world and sin at some future time!!! Do you believe that there will ever be a better time to break off the favour of man and escape destruction than the present? None! none! Then will you come to Jesus now? Are you saying - "Hitherto I have played a foolish game, but I will now turn my back upon the world and sin, and commit myself to Christ, let men say what they will." Will you do this? Then do it now, right here, in this house! Let the question be settled right here! Oh, do not postpone it! For the sake of your own immortal soul, decide now!

Shall we ask the Lord to interpose and break off your chain? Will you stretch forth your fettered hand and let it be struck off? Hold it out! hold it out! Stretch forth the fettered hand, and we will ask the Lord to break off the chain, to bring you out of your present state of thralldom, and assist you to commit yourself to Christ!

3. HARDENING THE HEART

“Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” - Hebrews 4:7

This reference to David relates to the ninety-fifth Psalm, from which these words were quoted. The apostle was addressing the Israelites, and, in this connection, was speaking to them of the manner in which their forefathers tempted God in the wilderness, the result of which was that they were not suffered to enter into the promised land. In warning the Israelites against unbelief, he says to them, “Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

I. THE MEANING OF THE WORD “HEART,” AS HERE USED

This term, like many others in the Bible, and in common language, is employed in a variety of senses. Here, however, it manifestly means the “will.” To harden the heart, in the sense in which the phrase is here understood, is doubtless to gather up the energies of the will, and to resist, to become stubborn, and obstinate. When the Bible commands or exhorts people not to harden their hearts, it is equivalent to saying, “Do not resist and strengthen yourselves against the voice of God. Do not become stubborn and rebellious, and set yourselves against the voice of mercy; but, today, after *so long a time*; if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” That is, if you are inclined to listen to what he says, you are not to harden your hearts and become stubborn.

Parents sometimes have the mortification of seeing their own children become stubborn against parental authority, and of seeing their requirements resisted, and their counsels set at nought. Parents often see children, when they undertake to press them to do anything, instead of obeying, wax stubborn and rebellious. They stand and resist, and manifest a cool determination to persevere in their disobedience; to persist in resisting the claims of their parents; and, so far as the philosophy of the act is concerned, resistance to God is just the same. The mental process is precisely similar. The mind resisting truth “is hardening the heart,” in the sense of the text. I shall next inquire

II. HOW IS IT THAT SINNERS DO HARDEN THEIR HEARTS?

How do they do this? And here let me say, that when individuals resist the truth - when they resist its authority when it is presented to them - they have to make some apology for their conduct. The natural tendency of the truth, when it is presented to the mind, is to convince it - to beget a choice - to lead the individual to yield himself up to its influence. The mind and truth sustain such relations to each other, that the former is naturally and necessarily influenced by the latter; and unless the individual resists the truth, its natural tendency is, as I have said, to lead the will into a state of obedience to it.

When persons harden their hearts, there must be some reason for their doing so. Take the case of the Jews - the apostle called on them not to harden their hearts. He knew they were in danger in doing so. He knew their prejudices of education, their Jewish notions, and peculiar views of things. He knew the course they had taken with Christ

previous to his crucifixion, and now he had been crucified, had risen from the dead, and was proclaimed to the world as a risen Saviour - he was writing this epistle to the Jews, and therefore reverts to a passage of their former national history. He calls their particular attention to it; and when he had strongly fixed their minds upon the course their fathers pursued, and its results - knowing well to whom he was addressing himself, being well versed, as I have said, in the prejudices against Christ - knowing their self-righteous spirit, and that they were prepared to resist Christ - knowing all these things, he warns them solemnly not to harden their hearts. It is easy to see that they could assign themselves multitudes of reasons for resistance. He knew that they were in error - and in great error - on the subject of religion, and therefore he called on them not to harden themselves - not to betake themselves to their prejudices - not to fly to their Jewish errors and peculiar notions, and to strengthen themselves in opposition to the truth.

This leads me to say that persons are very much in danger of hardening themselves, by holding fast to some erroneous opinion or improper practice to which they are committed. All their prejudices are in favour of it, and they are very jealous lest anything should disturb it. They hold on to some particular error, and whenever they are pressed to yield to the claims of God, unless it is done in a peculiar way, so as to be consistent with their prejudices, they are apt to rise up and strengthen themselves against it. What danger such persons are in of assigning to themselves, as a reason for resisting the truth, that it clashes with some of their favourite notions! When they see its practical results contradict some pet theory of theirs, they will strengthen themselves against it.

I recollect an instance of this kind. One evening, in the city of New York, I found among the inquirers a very anxious lady, who was exceedingly convicted of her sins, and pressed her strongly to submit to God. "Ah!" she said, "if I were sure I am in the right church, I would." "The right church!" said I, "I care not what church you are in, if you will only submit yourself to Christ." "But," she replied, "I am not in the Catholic Church, I am not in the right church; if I were, I would yield." So that her anxiety about the "right church" prevented her yielding at all, and she continued to harden her heart against Christ. This is often the case whether persons are Catholics, or whatever they are; when pressed strongly to submit, they flee to some prejudice, and immediately hide themselves behind it; and although they can not deny the truth of what they resist, still there is some error or prejudice to which they betake themselves by way of present resistance to the truth that is pressing their consciences.

Others harden themselves by indulging in a spirit of procrastination. "I will follow thee," is their language, "but not *now*." They say, "I intend to be religious," but when God presses them to yield, they are not quite ready. They say, "This is not exactly the time," assigning to themselves some reason for present delay in order to harden themselves. They have something, perhaps, in hand, which must be attended to first. Do let me ask you, now, how many times some of you, when thus pressed to yield at once to Christ, have urged some such reason as this for your delay?

Why are you not Christians? Is it because your attention has never been called to the subject? Is it because you never intend to be Christians? No! Well, what is the matter with you? How is it that you have always succeeded in assigning to yourself a reason

for a present delay? One time, you have one reason; at another, another; and you have, in fact, as many reasons as occasions, and they come up whenever you have been pressed immediately to surrender your heart to God. Now, I ask you if this is not true? I ask you if you do not know that it is true, as well as you know that you exist?

I remark again, that many persons strengthen themselves and harden their hearts by refusing, wherever they can refuse, to be convicted of their sins. They have a multitude of ways of avoiding the point, and force away the truth, and hardening themselves against it. Take care, for instance, of the practice of excusing sin. The veriest sinner in the world will make some excuse for what he is doing; and at least it suffices to satisfy himself. It is exceedingly difficult to convince a man against his will; it is remarkable to see how a man will evade conviction. Go to the slaveholder, for instance, and how many excuses he will make! How many things he will conjure up! Sometimes he will even flee to the Bible to defend himself; at other times, he will excuse himself by saying that he knows not what to do with his slaves - that the laws of his State forbid him to emancipate them. You may press him on every point - you may reason with him again and again, but all to no purpose. Men often excuse and defend their sins in this way; and sometimes they actually deny that they are sins at all, when they come to be pressed to give them up; but the apologies they make are such as God will never receive, although they suffice, at present, to delude themselves.

But again: Another way in which men harden themselves is, that they are unwilling to come and do what is implied in becoming Christians. They reason thus within themselves - "I must give up such and such things, if I become a Christian I must do thus and thus." They consider that they must make a profession of religion, and that, therefore, the eyes of the world will be thenceforth upon them; they see that they must consequently be careful how they conduct themselves. They can not go to such and such places of amusement; they must discontinue such and such things they have been in the habit of doing, and which are now so dear to them. This is how they reason; they begin to count the cost. But a short time since, I was pressing an individual to yield up certain forms of sin of which I knew him to be guilty. "Ah," said he, "if I begin to yield this and that, where will it all end? I must be consistent," said he, "and where shall I stop?" Where should he "stop?" It was clear that the cost was too great, and that he was therefore disposed to harden himself and resist God's claims, because he considered God required too much. If he were going to become a Christian, he knew that, to do his duty, he must give up sin as sin, and that it would cost him the sacrifice of his many idols. This is a very common practice. If you ask persons, in a general way, they are willing to be Christians; but "what will be expected of them?" Ah! that is quite a different thing! If you tell them what it really is to be a Christian, that is quite another thing. Now you have set them to count the cost, and they find it will involve too great a sacrifice. They are wholly unwilling to renounce themselves and their idols; and accordingly they betake themselves to hardening their hearts, and strengthening themselves in unbelief.

I will cite the case just referred to for a moment. The conversation respected, at that time, a particular form of sin. Now, why did he not yield at once? Why did he not instantly say, "I will give it up. I know it is wrong and inconsistent with love to God, and I will therefore renounce it." But instead of this, he saw that the principle on which he yielded this point would compel him to give up others; and therefore, he said, "if I

begin this, where shall I stop?" He gathered up all the reasons he could, and strengthened himself in his position. Thus he was hardening his heart; this was just what the Jews did when Christ preached.

Thus it is men perceive that it will call upon them to humble themselves before God, and make restitution where they have been fraudulent in their dealings; they see that to become Christians, implies that they undo, as far as it lies in their power, the wrong they may have committed, and become honest men. They see that multitudes of things are implied in listening to the voice of God, and becoming followers of Jesus Christ, and this causes them to surround themselves with considerations to sustain them in their unbelief and resistance to the authority of God. I might mention a great many other particulars under this head; I shall not, however, at present, do so, but in a few words show,

III. WHY MEN SHOULD NOT HARDEN THEIR HEARTS IN THIS WAY

Perhaps the first thing that I shall notice will startle some of you. It is this; you should not harden your hearts, "because, if you do not do so, you will be converted."

I have already said, that truth is so related to the mind, and the mind to truth, that when the mind perceives truth, with its practical bearing, this relation acts as a powerful impulse to the mind, tending strongly to induce it to yield and conform; it is a natural stimulus to the mind, prompting it to act in a given direction. To be sure, it can be resisted; and it is this resistance that God exhorts you to avoid, you are to let the truth take effect.

You recollect, perhaps, some of you, that the apostle says - I believe it is in the Epistle to the Romans - however, in the particular passage to which I was going to refer, God denounces those who restrain the truth, and go on in unrighteousness; that is, those who hold it back, and prevent it from influencing their mind. This is the way the heart is hardened, by refusing to yield to the truth, withholding the mind from going out in obedience to it.

Now, observe, beloved, that if the truth is but yielded to, this is conversion itself. *Conversion is the act of the mind in turning from error, selfishness, and sin, and yielding to the claims, and obeying the commands of the Almighty.* This is conversion.

Now, as I said, the natural tendency of the truth is to stimulate the mind to embrace and obey it. God has so constituted the mind, that, as everybody knows, truth is a most powerful stimulant, which invites and draws the mind in a given direction: Truth induces it to act in conformity with its dictates. Now, to do this, to obey the truth, that is conversion. If you do not obey it, it is because you harden yourself against it, and resist its influences; for it is an utter impossibility to be indifferent to the presentation of truth, and especially is it utterly impossible to maintain a blank indifference to the presentation of the great practical truths of Christianity. They are not mere abstractions, in which the mind sees no practical bearing, but they are realities of such a nature that the mind must either resist them or suffer them to guide it.

The apostle knew that if they did not harden themselves, they must surely be converted.

Another reason why you should not harden your hearts, is, that you will not be converted if you do. In other words, if you resist the Spirit, God never *forces* you against your will. If he can not persuade you to embrace the truth, he can not save you by a physical act of omnipotence, as, for instance, he could create a world. You are a free moral agent, and he can save you only in his own way. In other words, if he can not gain your own consent to be saved in his own way, he can not possibly save you at all. If you wish him to save you by moving your will, as I would move this lamp - [Mr. Finney here moved the branch of one of the pulpit lamps to and fro] - I say, if he is to save you as I move this lamp, he will not do it. It is not a physical operation that can make you willing; that is not the way in which the will is controlled. He must have your consent; and when he sends his ministers to reason with you - when his Spirit strives with you - he strives to gain your free consent; hence he says, "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." If conversion were a mere act of the physical omnipotence of God, he would not exhort you not to harden your hearts; for *how could you harden your hearts against, and resist a physical almightiness?*

Men who have this conception scoff at the idea of the sinner's hardening himself against God. Persons who talk thus, of course, assume that conversion does consist in an act of omnipotence; they seem unable to comprehend that conversion consists in God's securing your own consent, and that is all. Did you ever consider this, dying sinner? Did you ever reflect on the fact, that all that is necessary, is, to give your consent to be saved? You fancy you are willing; but the fact is, that your obstinacy is the only real difficulty to be overcome - to get you to yield yourself up to God's claims. It is easy for you to see, that if you harden your heart, and surround yourself with prejudices, gather all your energies up to resist - if you do this, it is easy for you to see that you can only expect to remain unconverted - to live, and die, and perish in your sins! While you harden yourself, it is impossible that you should be converted, for conversion is the very opposite of this resistance - it is the yielding yourself up; the claims of God.

Another reason why you should not harden your hearts, is, that *you may be given up!* God may give you up to the hardness of your hearts. The Bible shows that this is not uncommon. Whole generations of the Jews were thus given up. You may be, and there is considerable danger; the same God of mercy that now governs the world gave up whole generations in that comparatively dark generation; and if so, what reason have we to suppose that he will not do so with you? God, under the Gospel, is not more merciful than he was under the law - he is the same God. Some think there is not so much danger of this now; but the fact is, there is more, because there is more light. He gives them up because they resist the light of the truth with regard to his claims. I beg of you to consider this.

IV. WHOSE "VOICE" IS HERE REFERRED TO?

Is it the voice of a tyrant, who comes out with his omnipotent arm to crush you? "If you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Whose voice is it? In the first place, it is the voice of God; but, more than this, it is the voice of your Father! But is it the voice of your Father, with the rod of correction pursuing you, to subdue you by force?

Oh, no! it is the voice of his mercy - of his deepest compassion. Hear what he says: "Ephraim, my dear son; Ephraim, my pleasant child;" for although he spake against him, yet did he "earnestly remember him still." Like a father who has almost made up his mind to abandon a disobedient and cruel child, whose misconduct he could not endure, and whom he found it impossible to reform. All the father works up in him at the remembrance of that child; the parental heart yearned over him. "I have spoken against him, yet do I earnestly remember him still."

Just so God addresses you. He "earnestly remembers" you. He offers to forgive you. He says, "after so long a time." *How long a time?* How old are you? How many long years has God waited for you? Just number them up - some of you, perhaps, eighteen, twenty, twenty-five, thirty. How many years have you refused to hear the voice of your Father, your Saviour; the voice of mercy, the voice of invitation, the voice of promise, the voice of exhortation, and even of entreaty? By his providence, the work of the Spirit, the words of the inspired volume, the ministrations of his servants - in how many ways has this voice reached you? And now he says, "*after so long a time!*"

A few further remarks must close what I have to say; and the first remark is this: persons often mistake the true nature of hardness of heart. Supposing it to be involuntary, they lament it as a misfortune, rather than regret it as a crime. They suppose that the state of apathy which results from the resistance of their will, is hardness of heart. It is true that the mind apologises to itself for resistance to the claims of God, and, as a natural consequence, there is very little feeling in the mind, because it is under the necessity of making such a use of its powers as to cause great destitution of feeling. This is hardening the heart - that act of the mind in resisting the claims of God. For persons to excuse themselves by complaining that their hearts are hard, is only to add insult to injury. They resist God's claims, and then complain of the hardness this resistance induces; they harden themselves in the ways we have stated, rendering themselves obstinate against God, and then they complain of the results of their own actions. Now, is this the way?

I remark, once more, it is worthy of notice that the claims, commands, promises, and invitations of God are all in the present tense. Turn to the Bible, and from end to end you will find it is, "Today" if ye will hear his voice. "Now" is the accepted time. God says nothing of tomorrow; he does not even guarantee that we shall live till then. It is "today," after so long a time, harden not your hearts."

Again: The plea of inability is one of the most paltry, abusive, and blasphemous of all. What! Are men *not able* to refrain from hardening themselves? I have already said, and you all know, that it is the nature of truth to influence the mind when it receives it; and, when the Spirit does convert a man, it is by so presenting the truth as to gain his consent. Now, if there was not something in the truth itself adapted to influence the mind, he might continue to present the truth forever, without your ever being converted. It is because there is an adaptation in truth - something in the very nature of it, which tends to influence the mind of man. Now, when persons complain of their inability to embrace the truth, what an infinite mistake! God approaches with offers of mercy, and with the cup of salvation in his hand, saying, "Sinner! I am coming! Beware not to harden yourself. Do not cavil. Do not hide behind professors of religion. Do not procrastinate! for I am coming to win you."

Now, what does the sinner do? Why, he falls to hardening his heart, procrastinating, making all manner of excuses, and pleading his inability. Inability! What! Is not a man able to refrain from surrounding himself with considerations which make him stubborn? Is he not able to come from this soul-destroying business of hardening himself? Oh! sinner, you *are* able; that is not the difficulty.

Once more: I said this is a most *abusive* way of treating God. Why, just think. Here is God endeavouring to gain the sinner's consent - to what? Not be sent to hell. Oh, no! he is not trying to persuade you so to harden yourself as to consent to lie down in everlasting sorrow. Oh, no! he is not trying to persuade you to do anything, or to consent to anything, that will injure you. Oh, no! he is not trying to persuade you to give up anything that is really good - the relinquishment of which will make you wretched or unhappy - to give up all joy, and everything that is pleasant - to give up things that tend to peace - he is not endeavouring to persuade you to do any such thing as this. With regard to all such things, he is not only willing that you should have them, but would bring you into a state in which you could really enjoy them. He cries out, "Sinner! do thyself no harm!" He is trying to prevent you from injuring yourself, and not endeavouring to play off any game upon you which will interfere with your well-being or happiness; he is trying to prevent your ruining yourselves, and trying to consent to be blessed. Will it hurt you to give up your sins? God sent Christ to turn you away from those courses which, by a natural law, must prove your ruin. What is it, then, that God wishes you to do?

What is that sweet voice which falls so sweetly from heaven? It should melt all stubbornness down. It is the voice of his infinite compassion and love. Oh, sinner, destroy not thine own soul! Flee not from the Saviour who has come to save you! Harden not yourself against the offered mercy; and, now that the cross of salvation is passed around from lip to lip, do not push it away! What are you doing? Is God come to injure you? If he had come in wrath, he would not care whether you hardened your heart or not. O sinner! if you place him in such a relation that his infinite heart is obliged to make the sacrifice, when he enters into judgment he will not tell you not to harden yourself. Then you may harden yourself if you can. He says, "Can thy heart be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee?" Oh, no! But now it is different. Now he comes and sweetly tries to win you - he comes as a friend, as a father, as a Saviour! spreading out his broad arms of love to embosom you every one, drawing you so near to his great, gushing heart as to thrill its tides of eternal love through all your being. Oh! will you resist? What! "*after so long a time!*" Oh! sinner, is it not infinitely inexcusable? Shall he fail to get your consent? Then, when you sit before him in solemn judgment, and the universe shall all be gathered together, he will publish the fact of how, after he tried to spread out his broad, beneficent arms of love over you - how, after he tried to gather you under the wings of his protection - but ye would not! He could not gain your consent! What! shall it be told of any of you in the solemn judgment that God could not possibly gain your consent to the only terms on which he could possibly save you? Ah! when he shakes his skirts, as it were, and exclaims, "I am clear of thy blood." what will you say?

Again, he will have the eternal consolation of knowing that he has taken all the pains to get you to consent that he wisely could take. You will be obliged to say, "The fault was my own, and I have been an infinite fool! I have resisted the claims of Christ,

hardened myself against his dying love, and cast away my soul!" Sinners! how many times have you been invited? Can you remember? How many times have you seen the Lord's Table spread? Are you prepared to partake of the elements now about to be spread - the solemn avowal of your attachment to Christ? How many times, I ask again, have you been invited? Have you not had enough of sin? How much more do you want? Let me ask you another question - how much longer would you like to live in your sins? How many years have you already devoted to them? Do you think God *ought* to allow you to enjoy a little more sin? Suppose he, personally, put the questions, "Do you think I *ought* to allow you to live any longer in your sins? Do you think I *ought* to let you live to remain in rebellion any longer?" Suppose he should say, "Unless I fan your heaving lungs in sleep tonight you will be lost. Unless I keep you, you will lie down in hell before the morning. Now, do you think I *ought* to keep you alive to sin against me another day? Do you think that when you lie down in your sins, I *ought* to watch over you, and see that you do not die; and that Satan does not steal away your soul, and drag you down to the depths of hell?" Dare you look the Eternal in the face and say, "Yes, Lord." Dare you say, "I think I *ought* to be indulged a little longer, and not be hurried in this way?" No, indeed! You know you are without excuse. You could only say that you are "infinitely to blame," and you are in infinite danger if you do not tonight cease to sin, and yield yourself up.

[Mr. Finney, after a short prayer, dismissed the congregation, while the church remained to celebrate the Lord's Supper; however, seeing that between three and four hundred persons kept their seats, as "spectators," in the spacious galleries, Mr Finney, after the administration of the ordinance by the pastor (the Rev. Dr. Campbell), again addressed the assembly.]

Christ has invited you to "do this in remembrance" of him. Whose business is this? Is it yours only, or mine only; or is it equally incumbent on both? Did Christ die for you, and not for me? or for me, and not for you? or did he give himself up for us all? Surely it is the duty of all to "do this" for whom Christ died. Did he tell you to "do this," and you have really never done it? How is this? I want to know *why* you have never done it? Is it because you are not a Christian? Why are you not? When Dr. Campbell (the pastor of the church) announced that the communicants would seat themselves below, while the spectators would retire to the gallery - "Spectators! non-communicants!" said I to myself; "who are these non-communicants? Are there, then, those of Adam's race for whom Christ has not died? Are there those who will thus openly acknowledge that they have "no part or lot in the matter?" Suppose, now, that Christ actually had died only for a part of mankind, and you knew that it had no more reference to you non-communicants in the gallery than to the fallen angels! If you knew this, why, of course, I should expect to see you non-communicants; for why should you celebrate his death if his blood was not shed for you? You might then absent yourselves with some reason.

But, if this were the case, how could you sit round that gallery and look on? Now, do take this view of the matter, and consider it for a moment.

But Christ says, "Ho *everyone* that thirsteth, come ye to the waters of life - come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," - "Come unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth." Suppose, then, that the cup were handed round to you - would

you say, "Oh! I am not prepared: I am not a Christian?" Why are you not? You shut yourself out by your own consent.

"Not prepared!" You are neglecting Christ, and hardening your hearts against him - that is the reason you are "not prepared."

"Not prepared!" Just think of it! Who is it that requests you to "do this?" It is a friend - a dying friend - a friend dying in your stead. What does he say? He says, "I am just going to offer up my life for you; break this bread, pour out this wine, and partake of them in remembrance of me - partake *ye all* of it, and when you do so, remember my struggle, my groans, my agony, and death." Will you obey this dying injunction? Why, then, do you thus turn your backs upon it?

Suppose that a mortal should do you a similar favour? Suppose a fellow-creature should bleed and die in your stead, and in the agony of death should take a ring from his finger and say - "Here, dear friend, take this, wear it, look at it, and as often as you do so, remember me!" How would you regard this love-token presented in the hour of nature's final struggle? Would you throw the ring lightly away? Suppose any one should say - "Give me that ring;" or, "How much will you take for it?" How much would you take for it? Why you would sooner part with your heart's blood than lose it; and if they inquired why you so prized it, you would tell them your simple story, and assure them that nothing could induce you to part with it.

Now, think of this! Yet when Christ made an effort to save you from endless death, by suffering himself, how indifferent you are! Was it a mere ring? No! He took bread and brake it, saying, "This is my body which was broken for you;" he took wine and poured out, saying, "This is my blood which was shed for you, do this in remembrance of me." Who is to "do this?" Why, all of you; seeing that for all of you his blood was shed.

But practically you say, "I will not do this," and turn your back on the ordinance. What must angels think, when they see a number of persons for whom Christ died, and to whom he said, "Do this in remembrance of me," but who will not do it? If there can be amazement in heaven, surely this would cause it.

Now, *will you ever neglect it again?* I recollect an instance of an individual present at a season like this, when the question came up about his long neglect, when he was so impressed by the consideration of the sin and danger of his position, that he resolved on the spot, that he would never voluntarily neglect it again. At the next communion he was there, and could rejoice in the resolution he had taken, to draw near that great heart of love. After that he was always one of the first at the table.

What do you say tonight? Now think of this when you lay your head on your pillow to night. Can you say, "Lord, this night have I rejected thee publicly before the whole congregation." Try to go to sleep, but say first, "Lord, do not let me die to night, I have just come away from thy table and refused to acknowledge thee, and do not let me go to hell tonight."

Would you not blush to talk thus? would you not rather say, "O my God! I have tonight rejected Jesus, and how dare I sleep in my sins? This night, Lord, I in my heart

give thee a solemn pledge, that, by thy grace, I will never turn my back on that ordinance again. It shall never be said of me (by thy grace), that I am not prepared. I will remember thee; and in the presence of heaven and earth, I will manifest my gratitude to thee from this time." Oh! let it be written in heaven!

4. THE CONVERSION OF CHILDREN

I have so many things to say to parents, that I hardly know where to begin. It is one of those subjects upon which so much needs to be said. The greatest influence in the whole government of God, exercised over the destinies of the world, is exercised in the family. The mother begins the work. The parents influence is no doubt the supreme influence. God designed it should be so. This was one object in establishing the family relation. It was not only to secure among human beings temporal blessings, the care and nurture of the young, but that they should have a spiritual influence, and exert it over their offspring; the great end God had in view was their spiritual well-being. This was one of his great designs, no doubt; but it is not kept in view by parents; and therefore the great object of the Almighty in establishing the family relation - so far, at least as children are concerned, is defeated.

It should always be remembered, that this influence, whatever it may be, takes place in very early life, and is generally decisive, one way or the other; the after life is in most cases, little more than the development of what has been thus commenced. The mother as I have said begins the work; she heads the undertaking; and exerts more influence over the child at first than everything else; and if she understands what she is about - if she is a pious woman - if she avails herself of the facilities God has put into her hands she will be, under God, the greatest possible blessing to that child. Parents stand in such peculiar relations that their children naturally have more confidence in their father and mother than in anyone else. Their position gives them an influence over the youthful mind, for good or for evil, with which no other influence in the world can compare. Whatever is done, in this direction is done and will be done in very early life, and the results are only developing themselves ever after.

But to explain what I mean - parents have a mighty influence over little children - they lead them to their earliest thoughts, and give them most of their first ideas. The spirit of the parent teaches the child a great deal, even before his words can teach him. The example and influence of the parent is not confined to mere verbal teaching; everything he does has an influence over the child; every word the parent says before it can fully tell the meaning of words, has an influence over it; and when it comes to understand language, the little mind weighs all that it hears and thus the child is educated. Now if the parents' influence is of a worldly character - if there is not that in the parent which early leads the child to think about its soul and God - if it does not see in the parent a concern for his own soul, its education has begun in the wrong direction. If the parent neglects to let his child see in very early life, that he is concerned for its salvation - if the idea of religion is not a prominent idea - if the child does not see that the subject is working in the parents mind, if he does not see that the will of God is the parents' life, and that to glorify God is the parents' end - if he does not see these things in the parents, but the contrary, the child will understand it, think of it, and it will have its influence over him much earlier than parents are in the habit of believing. I have known children, for instance, whose temperament was such, that when very young, they talked much about religion, and were constantly asking questions about it; so thoroughly indeed, were their little minds engrossed with the subject, that they scarcely seemed to know that there were any other places than those to which their parents were accustomed to resort for religious worship. Even when strangers have come in, they have been accustomed to ask, "is that person a Christian?"

The early conversion of children materially depends on the parents securing a lodgment for religious truth among the earliest thoughts which are developed in the mind. It is curious to see how children observe when parents pray and recognise God in all their ways. It is remarkable to see the effect of this on their infant minds; they get their little chairs, kneel down and try to pray. They see their parents pray. Their mother is in the habit of taking them and praying with them, from their very birth; and as soon as they can understand her, she leads them into her closet, reads the Bible to them, talks about the Saviour, and prays with them daily - sometimes several times a day and in consequence of this, you will see them get their little chairs, and have their little meetings, and go down on their knees and pray for themselves. One mother recently writing to me says - "Little Willy gets his chair, kneels down, and clasping his little hands, says, 'O Lor' (he could not articulate Lord)." Every little thing would begin to pray if he had such a mother. Now the tendency of all this is to keep the little one's thoughts awake; from the spirit and temper of the parent, he perceives that religion is something of supreme importance. God comes to be in all his little thoughts. He sees that religion is the great concern of the parents' life, and where this is the case, I do not believe that there is one case in a thousand, in which children are not very early converted - that is of course, unless there be some error in the teaching or conception of the parent that gets in the way, and keeps this influence from producing its natural results. I have known pious parents who have said much to their children on the subject of religion, but who, from holding certain erroneous views, have laid stumbling blocks in their way; the parents taught them some things which were false, and which consequently proved hindrances to them.

It is important that parents should understand, that there is only one of two courses open to them with regard to their children, they must either exert a worldly influence which would give their little minds an entirely wrong direction - or a spiritual one, which will set them after religion; the child's mind will be caused to ferment on the subject of religion; its earliest thoughts will be about religion; the earliest influences they can remember, will be convictions of sin; Heaven and Hell, Christ and Eternity, will put their little minds into a state of effervescence. These influences commence ere the child has left the lap of its loving mother.

For the few moments I can spend in addressing you, I shall turn your attention to a few things which parents must avoid, if they would secure the salvation of their children.

First. Be sure you don't stumble yourself by the idea that "you can't expect" the early conversion of your children. A worthy deacon from Birmingham called on me a few hours ago at Dr. Campbell's. His family were all converted and united to the church; his youngest child was only about ten years of age. He told me that he had been introduced to the deacon of one of the City churches, who had a large family, not one of whom were converted, and who on being apprised of the happy condition of the Birmingham family, said "Well you know we can not *give* grace to our children." "O no" said the Birmingham brother, "but we can use the means in our possession to make them Christians." When the fact came out that the youngest child was only ten years' old, the City deacon shook his head. "Ah!" said he "I don't believe in forcing people into the church." "Nor do I" was the response, "I did all I dare do, and said all I dare say, but what could anyone do or say, but let her profess her faith in Christ as other people do?"

I know that one of the greatest stumbling blocks is cast in the way of families by the idea, that to expect the early conversion of children, is to say the least, rather enthusiastic “the idea of a child of ten years of age being converted! why we can not believe it!” But suppose I were to preach the funeral sermon of such a child and to say, “it is gone to hell no doubt.” “What makes you say so?” you would say. Why, you do not pretend that the child is not a sinner at ten years of age? This is the greatest error that can be entertained. If a child has intelligence enough to sin, has it not intelligence enough to be converted? If not, what becomes of children old enough to sin, but not old enough to be converted? The fact is that it is easier, so to speak, for the Holy Spirit to convert a child, than it is for him to convert a man. Now do let me ask, what is in the way of the child’s conversion? When its little conscience first wakes up, sin takes such a twinging hold of it, that it goes into the greatest agony at the thought of it. This is natural; for the little conscience has not yet been trifled and tampered with. Now can not the Spirit of God teach such children? What? Can not those who understand the nature of faith in the parent, understand the nature of faith in God? Can not those who understand parental protection and love, understand the protection and love of their heavenly father? Can not those who know so well how to depend on a parent, depend on God? They can surely do it more easily then, than if they wait until they have learned, from contact with the world, to mistrust everybody and everything. Can not they, whose tender hearts are so ready to trust, be taught to exercise faith in Christ? Why, this is the most likely time in their lives. It is much more likely then, that they will be converted than it is that if you allow them to grow up and form bad habits, those habits will be more easily corrected, than if you had used the best and earliest means to prevent their formation. The fact is the Spirit of God is always ready to cooperate with the judicious use of means - just as ready to cooperate with children as with adults. But parents allow children to grow up and escape from under their influence, with the false impression, that such is not the case. I have observed that, just so far as parents have intelligently used the best means in their power to secure the early conversion of their children, just so far have they been successful in their endeavours. But when the contrary has been the case, I have not been surprised to find that the children have grown up to manhood and womanhood unconverted.

I have sometimes asked parents, if they ever made it a great pressing business to secure the early conversion of their children “O no; we never set ourselves to make it a pressing business to secure them for God.” You don’t eh? Then is it any wonder that they are not converted? There are multitudes of persons who are obliged to admit, that they never in good earnest, set about promoting the conversion of their children and securing it under God. I wish I had time, I could tell you of numbers of cases, where such sons and daughters have turned out badly. Oh! What stories have I listened to, of the awful results of the neglect of parents with regard to this matter!

Secondly. Many persons entertain ideas of God’s sovereignty which are a great stumbling block in the way of the early conversion of their children.

The man who said, “We can not give grace to our children” had doubtless an idea that God’s sovereignty was, in some way, peculiarly connected with the act. Such persons associate God’s sovereignty with conversion in a way that they associate it with nothing else. In every other matter they exert themselves, as though there were some connection between means and ends in the government of God but with respect to

conversion. They seem to take it for granted that there is no connection between means and ends in the act of conversion - that God sets aside, in the conversion of men, all the laws by which he invariably operates at other times - and that he exercises a peculiar kind of sovereignty in that particular instance. I have been not a little surprised to find that multitudes of persons have such ideas of God's sovereignty and agency, that they can recognise his hand in nothing short of an absolute miracle. For example; a person goes and talks to a child in such a manner as to make a deep impression on its infant mind, and the impression is made accordingly; the child awakes to a deep sense of sin and importance of religion. But what does the parent say? "Let it alone now, and we will see whether you have been merely playing upon the child's feelings, or whether the spirit has been cooperating." The fact is the child is talked to in the very way to produce the effect predicted. If a preacher so discourses as to affect the minds of his audience in a certain way, and accordingly they are so affected. Ah? then God has nothing to do with it? So I suppose, in your idea, it must be something in which there can be no perceivable relation between the means and the ends, in order to have God recognised? But, if there really is any natural and necessary connection between the means and the end, why then is not God recognised, unless in an act in which he is supposed to set aside this connection, and act in a manner entirely inconsistent with it? But when persons talk in this way, why are they not consistent in carrying the matter right out? Now if you sit down and converse with a child about playing marbles, who could expect that such conversation would be followed by any religious result? And if a minister got into a pulpit and preached about politics, would you expect anybody to be converted? It seems therefore to be necessary that the subject of the discourse should have a religious leaning in order to expect a religious effect. It must not be some historical facts in no way connected with what the sinner has to do - you could not expect that to have the desired results; he must press the matter home, till the sinner fully feels that he is virtually saying, "Thou art the man." Ah! and now what is this? "Oh!" you say, "you have been playing upon his sympathies." But if you reason so where are we to stop? The fact is you do not - you can not expect God to convert any one when there is no sort of relevancy, in the means used; and if some relevancy, even according to your own ideas of divine sovereignty, is necessary in the means employed, pray *how much* relevancy is absolutely indispensable? When God works, he can never be expected to commit any infraction of the laws which he himself has ordained for the government of the universe; and if he does operate according to his own laws, why should it be doubted that he is operating at all? For my part, I am always expecting to see God work in accordance with his own established laws, and I recognise him all the more, when I see how nicely he adapts the means to the end.

He created mind and established its relations to truth, and when he presents truth to the mind, and it is received in accordance with principles he has ordained, am I not to recognise the hand of God in them?

Parents do not seem to feel the necessity of their applying themselves to secure the early conversion of their children, with as much earnestness as they seek their recovery when sick. A little error in nursing will often have a most dangerous influence on the health of the patient, and a little error in instruction may induce a serious turn in the thoughts, and perhaps, present a fatal stumbling block. If God allows things to take this course in the physical world, he will permit it in the moral world. Why not? If

certain laws are violated in the physical world, God allows the thing to take its natural course, why should he adopt a different policy towards the moral world? This is the very way in which God's sovereignty really manifests itself. If you look round on the natural world, you will see that God permits immense results to turn on the most trifling violation of natural laws. A ship would sink though filled with devoted missionaries, if the natural law is neglected. In fact - if they have neglected to take compass or chart, or some such necessary precaution on the pretence of trusting to the sovereignty of God, they have in reality been tempting God, by not taking care to adjust themselves to his physical laws; and that ship, although, as I have said, it is filled with missionaries, must go to the bottom! And in such a case, perhaps, the salvation of thousands of souls might be suspended on that ship's reaching its destination in safety. It is the same in the moral world, let mother or father make a mistake, either moral or physical; in one instance it is death to the body - in the other to the soul. This is the teaching of the Bible, and it is borne out by experience. Men should know that they can as certainly ruin the soul, as they can kill the body.

Thirdly. Care should be taken not to cause the child to stumble through bad government, or no government at all.

Some govern their families too much - others not at all. Now I should like to write a book on such a question as this, instead of talking to you for half an hour. It is really dreadful to see; oftentimes the spirit of the whole family government is such as to make a false impression; it is not a Christian government - a government of love; it is not the firm spirit of God's government; it is either despotism on the one hand, or on the other hand, no government at all. In other cases, there is one half the time too much rigour, and the other half too much laxity.

Let me say again. All the impressions thus made affect the children in connection with religion. If the general impression of your deportment should give them to understand that you are "in God's stead" to them, you can not conceive the importance of thus early seizing their little minds and will, and bringing them under proper control. Oh! that little will! If unsubdued, what will it cost that child to be converted, if it ever is converted! When parents permit the will to pass unsubdued, their little ones get into such a habit of self-will, as to render it extremely doubtful whether they will ever bow either to God or man - to say the least, it will render it far more difficult for them to do so, than it would have been had a contrary course been pursued. When I see children affected to an agony at their position, and still unable fully to yield and come into the kingdom, I always suspect they have never been properly taught to yield to parental authority in their childhood. It is of the utmost importance to take hold of this will, as soon as it develops itself, and hold it as the representative of the Almighty, to exert the first moral influence under God's moral government. Take hold of that little will kindly, and hold it as a sacred trust under God. Hold it by parental authority and love - so kindly and firmly, that it is, as it were, lost in your will, and controlled by it. Even a look, or a motion of the hand, when understood, should be immediately and willingly obeyed; and by and bye, when it can understand about God, give the whole weight of your will to lead the child's will to submit to God. Did you ever think what a powerful influence you possess? Where the little will from the first has been held under control, and the child is old enough to be talked to about God, bring all your powers to bear upon it, to induce it to yield itself up to God, and you will find yourself, as it were, almost

handing it over to God. I could tell you some extraordinary things of the amazing power of parents in this position, and how God uses this influence to accomplish his purposes. You are not to suppose that because your influence is used as a means, that God has nothing to do with it; he has placed you where you are in order to use you. He has stationed you there to watch over the development of that little will, and kindly to control it, so that in due season you may be prepared to hand it over to God through the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

This is the great work which you are sent to do, Fathers! Let your parental heart draw the little one close to it, and let your mind draw the little mind into close connection with it, and let the little will be as far as possible subject to, and guided by your will. Do it with prayer before God, and you need not fear a failure. As soon as the little will can be influenced by religious truth, pour it in with all the weight of your parental authority, and carry that will to God.

A Christian lady once informed me, that she had found her daughter under conviction of sin. "I have so trained her," she said, "from her infancy, that she regards my will as her law; a look from me is enough. I did not at first understand properly my relations to her with reference to her conversion; but as soon as the thought came before my mind, that I could exert a direct and powerful influence in the matter, and that the Spirit of God would use that influence, I took the child with me to my closet, and prayed with her. I there showed her what it was her duty to do with regard to yielding up herself to Christ; I talked and prayed with her, and urged the matter in this light - 'Now, my child, you never hesitate to obey your mother in other things, and I want you now at once to renounce yourself, and give yourself fully up to Christ.'" Before they left the closet, she said she had reason to believe that her child had really given herself up to God. Said she, "Never before had I any idea that the Spirit of God would so use this influence." Now mark; this was not any such authority as would *threaten to whip the child!* but that proper parental influence which can carry the little mind with an amazing power; and when the whole weight of this parental influence is concentrated upon the single question of "my child give your heart this moment to Christ," what human influence can be more powerful? And this, of course, is backed up by the word of God, and seconded by the Spirit of God - all this in addition to that will to which the child has always been accustomed to yield. I have seen the infinite importance of this not only in my own, but in many other families.

Fourthly. Parents are very apt to stumble their children by their temper.

It destroys the confidence of the child in their piety, and causes him to doubt their sincerity; and thus the parent loses all hold on him. Few things more surely and speedily destroy the influence of a parent than to scold them peevishly, or even to speak to them snappishly, and call them hard names. Anything that savours of ill temper has a dreadfully powerful influence in leading the child away from Christ, and counteracting well-meant endeavours.

Fifthly. Parents must be careful to feel and manifest concern for their spiritual welfare; for if they do not, a child at that age can not be expected to feel a concern for himself.

Suppose a parent felt truly concerned to keep a child out of bad company, he would keep this before the mind of the child - if concerned for his health he would keep that

before the little one, and teach him how to take care of it. It is just the same with anything else of this kind. Now the parent ought to feel and manifest a supreme interest in the child's salvation. Let all your conversation plainly indicate that it is so. Let your children see that health, worldly prospects and everything else must be subordinate to religion. Do these things, and you are beginning right; and by a natural law you can hardly fail to see their early conversion.

Sixthly. Parents often manifest great error, in not seeing to it that their children are punctual and regular at public worship.

I have been in a great many churches, and have known the history of a great many families. Sometimes I have found households, the children of which were both punctual and regular. At chapel you would see, in the pews where some families sat, all the children able to come out always there. Where their parents were there were they. They felt that they were no more expected to absent themselves from chapel when their parents went, than from the dinner table. It was a thing of course; they were not suffered to wander about and absent themselves, their parents not knowing where they went; for where this is suffered parents have little or no religious influence over them. Parents must also guard against laxity with reference to the due observance of the Lord's Day. It is not right to throw up everything into the hands of the sovereignty of God, assuming that that alone will convert them, whatever influence may be brought to bear upon them, than which there is not a greater falsehood; a more damning error never entered the world. It is true other influences may possibly convert the child, and as other influences may save the child in sickness, but no thanks to the parents in either case.

There is another fault of parents which I must notice. They do not take sufficient pains to *render home happy*; and the children not finding friendship and sympathy at home, run about elsewhere in search of it. Their home is not a happy one, and they consequently rove about, and come under bad influences. Now a happy home is one of the principal things at which a parent should aim. The home should be rendered so pleasant that the child would rather remain there than go about. Dear parents! are you aware how often a child's life is embittered by the neglect of this? They must be made happy, and have something to love at home, or they will naturally seek company and happiness somewhere else. Oh! that parents would see the necessity of using this and every other means they can devise to secure and retain their proper influence over the little minds! They ought to feel towards you so that they would sooner tell you than anybody else their little thoughts. Fathers are more apt to neglect this than mothers; children often seem afraid of their fathers, so that they can not tell him the workings of their little minds. He treats them with a kind of despotism, manifests no interest in their little concerns; and as he does not sympathise with them, they turn to someone else. Thus those whose hearts ought always to run in sympathy with them have shut them out; and what do they do? They turn away and fall under some other influence, and they are gone! How many parents who have had to lament the evil conduct of their children, who, if they could look back might attribute it largely to this! The father has been sharp, has not kept his influence over their little hearts. Oh! how often religious people, and even ministers, have been so busy with other matters, that they have neglected their children in this respect, and have so shut them out, as it were from their hearts, that they have fallen into other hands, and under evil influences.

Now, dear parents, one of the first things God wishes you to do, is to secure and retain the affections and confidence of your children, and to use your influence over them for him. In order to keep their hearts open to you, let yours be open to them. Let them know that if there is any burden on their minds, you will be the very first to sympathise with them. You will surely secure your end if you do so. But, on the contrary, if they are afraid to approach you because you keep them at such a distance, then, if they are not ruined, no thanks to you; and instead of telling you all the temptations and trials they fall into, all their plans, the books they read - instead of feeling that in you they have advisers who can and will sympathise with them - they will manifest the same reserve to you on these matters that you have displayed to them, and you have, therefore, failed in a vital point. I would that time did not so press, for I have ten times more than this to say, but I must pass rapidly on.

Another point I wish to notice is, the evil practice of allowing children to wander about where they will in the evening. Now, if, as I have said, you would make the home what it should be, they would *never want* to do this; they would rather be with you than anywhere; but if you suffer them to go out and keep late hours, they are sure to go in the way of temptation. I have often seen too, the injurious influence of holidays being so numerous and protracted, and of the difference parents make at such times with regard to their control over the children. They are allowed to do things then, *because* it is a holiday, which you would not permit at other times, and this leads them astray. But I can not enlarge upon this point just now, time forbids; but the holidays are near, and what will be your influence over them during that period? Parents! think of this.

Once more. Parents should always be wide awake to secure the conversion of their children during revivals of religion. If I had time, I could tell you many remarkable things, which have come under my own observation, connected with families, who have allowed revivals to take place and pass away without endeavouring to turn them to account in this direction. Sometimes the parents themselves will not enter into these revivals, although they are professors of religion; on the contrary, many speak against them, or cast a slight on something connected with the movement; and thus, as far as their influence is concerned, they shut the children out from blessings they might otherwise probably have received. Other persons, although they do not actually speak against it, yet refrain from entering into the work. They come and go again and again, and while multitudes are blessed they seem never to have taken up the subject, as if they had any personal concern in it. They have never endeavoured to secure a blessing for themselves and their households. They never seem to say, "Oh, is not Christ to visit our family?" They pass it by, and let it go. It is, in fact, just tantamount to this: Christ comes into the neighbourhood, and passes along, but they never invite him into *their* house, and they, with their households, are passed by and remain unblessed. I have inquired into some of these cases, and it has become a matter of remark, that the children often turn out badly; this is true, I believe in eight cases out of ten. I have now before my mind a case in point. Some years back, I spent a short time in Philadelphia, and knew a family that did this. The husband and wife were both professors, but she was a worldly-minded woman. He felt considerably for his children, and I talked with him on the subject several times. He very delicately hinted to me that his wife did not sympathise with the movement, and that the daughters were under her influence, and like-minded with herself, and regarded her opinion in preference to his. Now, mark: I inquired about this family some years after, and what had become of them? One of the

daughters had married, and after a year or two eloped from her husband with another man. Some time after the others went in the same direction - all turned out in a wretched manner. And this is only a specimen of a multitude of cases, which have actually come under my own observation.

It is therefore of the utmost moment that children should be immediately brought to Christ. The parents should say, "Now, Lord Jesus, thou art passing by; do thou have mercy on my children!" If you have hitherto exerted an improper influence, try at once to repair the evil done as well as you can. Do all that lies in your power; set your heart fully on securing the conversion of your children, and do it *now*! Begin at once with all your children, and especially those that have reached an intelligent age; and oh! I beseech you, do not let the Spirit manifest itself in this church and congregation, and you remain at a distance from the work! what do you think the Almighty will say about your family? What do you think he will say if you have not taken precautions to preserve yourselves in the visit of the destroying angel, by sprinkling the blood on the lintels and posts of your doors? Do every thing according to the rule which God has laid down; if you do not, when the destroying angel passes by, what will become of you and your family?

But I can not continue these remarks tonight. There are thousands of things I might say, but I must reserve them for a future opportunity.

5. CHRIST APPEARING AMONG HIS PEOPLE

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts.” - Malachi 3:1-5

These words were originally spoken by Malachi respecting Christ and John the Baptist. We learn from the New Testament that John the Baptist was the messenger who was sent before the face of the Messiah to prepare the way before him. We find this explained in the third chapter of the Gospel by St. Matthew, which I read to you at the commencement of the service. John the Baptist was sent before Christ, and Christ was the Lord who suddenly came to his temple; and the things followed his coming that are here spoken of in this passage of scripture - as also in a great many other passages of scripture. We have here not only a fact announced, but a principle revealed in reference to religion and God’s government of men. Christ had a church on earth when he came, but it needed searching and purifying, and he came for the sake of carrying forward this work. In this passage we have a striking illustration of the manner in which Christ deals with his people when ever he comes amongst them to search and purify them.

My present design is to notice the characteristics of a genuine appearing of Christ among the people to revive his work - the revival of religion among them. There are many other passages of scripture in various parts of the Bible which reveals the same principle. It is said of Christ, you recollect, that when He came his fan was to be in his hand and that he should thoroughly purge his floor, gathering the wheat into his garner, and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

It is often of the greatest importance that men should consider well what are the true characteristics of Christ coming among his people - what are the indications and evidences of it? There are a great many reasons why people should understand how such an appearing may be known, some of which reasons I shall have occasion to point out this morning. Before Christ personally appeared among the Jews he sent his messenger to prepare the way. John the Baptist was sent, you know, to call the attention of the people to the near approach of the Messiah, and to prepare them to receive him. Now this is a principle of the divine government, that when Christ is about to appear to revive his work among His people he sends a messenger to prepare his way. Nay! it is a curious fact that when he comes to judge and to condemn men he often sends them warning - he sends a messenger to prepare his way, whether he comes in judgment or in mercy: this is a very common thing and has been in all times;

when he comes in judgment he warns men in order to put them on their guard, if by any means he may bring them to repentance; and when he comes in mercy he prepares them for such a visitation also - therefore, in the first instance, when the Lord comes to revive his work, somebody will be stirred up to call the attention of the people to the real condition of things and the necessity for a reformation among them. You will find this to be uniformly the fact, that when Christ is about to appear somebody will be stirred up to consider the spiritual wants of the people, and will do more or less to prepare the way for the coming of Christ by calling the attention of the people to their necessities. Sometimes it will be the pastor of the church, and this will generally be the case, or the leading members of the church, or other instrumentalities, will call the attention of the people to their spiritual wants, and then after this has been done, the Lord will suddenly come to his temple.

There is first the seeking after the Lord, then a calling upon his name in earnest supplications for him to revive his work, and then the Lord whom they seek will suddenly come to his temple. The Lord's temple is his true church on earth, of which the temple at Jerusalem was only a type; and doubtless reference is made in this passage to the people of God and not merely to the temple at Jerusalem. In the second verse it is said, "But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap."

Now what did Christ do when he first appeared amongst men? And here let me say that what he did then he does substantially now under similar circumstances, and for the same reason - because of the necessity for it; now it is always to be assumed when Christ comes to revive his work that such a revival is needed. But what is implied in such a necessity as a visitation for a revival? There is a great deal implied in the necessity for such a visitation; for this reason, whenever he comes to revive his work in any place there is a great need for it. It implies that there is much that is wrong, and that there is therefore much need for a reformation - this is always implied in a reformation of religion. In the first place some are stirred up to see that such things are needed; they look and seek for a reformation and after a time the Lord suddenly comes. "But who shall abide the day of his coming"? What is his object in coming? what will he say? what will he do? "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness." Of course then whenever a revival is needed, this may be expected that when Christ comes there will first be a tremendous searching among the people.

When he did come what did he do? "Think not," he says, "I am come to bring peace on earth, but a sword; for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." What did he do? Why he began at the fundamental difficulty; he began by upturning the foundations of their hopes; all their self-righteous expectations. He brought to bear upon them a searching ministry. Observe, by his searching ministry, he threw them into the utmost distress, and agony of mind; he revealed to them the spirituality of God's law - of the whole Bible as it then existed; and brought so much truth to bear upon them as to search them out. Now this is what he always does: this is his first work. He must try the metal to see what

dross there is in it: he must see what chaff there is with the wheat, and then fan it away. He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver and gold: he must put them into the fiery furnace, by bringing truth to bear upon them in such a manner, as to purge the dross from the pure gold.

But let me say again: in such processes as this, it will very generally be found that certain classes of persons are peculiarly affected. We find in the present case, that Christ took in hand chiefly the Pharisees, the leaders of the church, and in a most unsparing manner searched and tried them; reproved their errors; contradicted them, and turned their false teaching completely upside down. To be sure this greatly offended them; very greatly tried them. But it is easy to see that this must have been the first work with him, for he came to purify the Jewish Church, and he must do this, by teaching them their errors and misconceptions - their errors of doctrine and their misconceptions of the law of God. Now what he did then, he always does with all churches and all people, when he comes to revive his work; whatever errors and misconceptions they may be labouring under he must set himself to correct. If he find them with superficial views of the spirituality of God's law, he must correct them: if they have superficial views of the depravity of the human heart, they must be corrected - if they have Antinomian views on the one hand, or legal self-righteous views on the other, they must be corrected. He must cast light on all the dark places, search the nooks and corners; and dispel all errors by the powerful light of truth: this must always be the case. And here let me say, that it is almost always true, that when the church or religion wants reviving in any community, much of the difficulty lies - when perhaps people are little aware of it - in their having settled down into some false conception of things, and mistaken their own spiritual state, and have thus betaken themselves, to various forms of error, more or less serious and fatal; so that after all they are not in that state in which Christ wishes them to be, but yet persuade themselves, that they are in a state which is acceptable to God. Now all this must be corrected; consequently when he takes hold of any community, any church, any people, any nation, you will always find that he begins in high places: he will begin among the leaders of Israel; among the heads of the people, and he will give them a terrible searching; he will try their spirits, their teaching, their lives, and he will most severely try them. It is very common - I have always witnessed it - for Christ when he comes to revive his work, to begin by trying the ministers themselves; "he will purify the sons of Levi" - this he always does in all places. Indeed he needs to try them, that they may be instrumental in trying others: he needs to search them, that they be instrumental in searching others. He is going to work by them and through them, and therefore he will first give them a most tremendous sifting and searching; their motives will be searched, all their springs of action will be laid bare, and he will bring them to see their errors, and feel them too. I have many times known such terrible searchings to take possession of even ministers themselves in revivals of religion, that they would for a time almost despair, indeed I have known them quite do so for a time. Now this, I say, may be expected.

But let me say again: when Christ comes, of course, his object is to search out wrong every where and set it right. He will search out the carnal professors of religion. These are divided into various classes. Sometimes there are ambitious persons in the church, who have an ambition to rise in the church - their ambition takes a religious type. They wish to be highly influential, to be highly respected, to be put forward in the church, and to be held in great esteem; now where there has been such ambition as this, Christ

sees it, and will search it out. How often have I seen such persons as these searched out in such a manner as greatly to expose and mortify them. With men who have thus been ambitious, Christ will take such a course, as to show that they have been spiritually ambitious: if they wanted to be thought very respectable, and be very high and influential in the church - he will put them down when he comes to revive his work. There is a great deal of this very often in churches, but Christ will surely search it out and destroy it. "Who shall abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" Again there are many professors of religion who have a worldly ambition; they want to rise in the world, they are trying to climb into the highest places of society - they court alliances with families who are on the high places of the earth. Now Christ at his appearing will search out these worldly minded professors, and oftentimes will make terrible revelations of their state of mind. Some have been spiritually proud, or have had a worldly pride, and they will all be searched out. Again: oftentimes when he comes, he will make revelations of character, and reveal the thoughts of many hearts, in a manner that shall be truly terrible and shocking; things shall appear which were not supposed to have any existence: with respect even to religious teachers, things shall come out of such a nature as to shock men, and they will say who would have expected that? Who would have supposed that such and such things existed? Who would have expected that such a state of things existed, as actually did exist at the time of our Lord's appearing in Judea? What a state of things did his coming reveal! Who would have expected it? And what a stumbling block it must have been to the mass of the nation that all the teachers and leaders of the people should deny that he was Christ; they could not recognise his likeness to the prophetic announcements, which has been made of him, and so they rose to oppose him.

Now we say, what a stumbling block this must have been to the great mass of the people, who were accustomed to look up to their teachers as the very best of men, and the most excellent of the earth: for it had come to be said, if any men are religious, the Pharisees are; if any men may hope to be saved, the Pharisees may - they were regarded by the people as the most excellent of the earth. Now mark! what a stumbling block it must have been to the mass of the nation, that this class of people, almost to a man, rose up to oppose Christ when he came. They did not know him: they would not acknowledge him; they were angry with his preaching, and denounced the searching manner in which he dealt with them. It is always the case now, that just in proportion as people are out of the way in any church, or in any given locality or country, two things will be seen: first, that they do not know it themselves - they will be blind to their own position; and second, just in proportion as they are out of the way, will they be taken by surprise at Christ's coming. These same indications will be seen more or less, as the state of things more or less resembles those which existed when our Lord was upon earth. If the church are settled down with some Abraham for their father; if they prefer to be the followers of some man or somebody who has stood very high in the Church of God, there will always be certain indications boiling out and revealing themselves, which are not in harmony with the Gospel.

Now this is a very striking fact, that oftentimes without being aware of it, people get into such a position as entirely to misapprehend the truth. Again: "the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed," when Christ comes. Now it often comes to pass, that men do not clearly reveal to their fellow creatures the deepest springs of action within them, unless something is done to search them out; but when certain things are done,

they will reveal the deepest springs of action within them. Some men, when Christ comes to revive his work, will reveal great spiritual pride and arrogance. They pretended to be very humble, and very prayerful, and all their deportment before people would seem to tell them that they were really so; but when Christ comes and begins to search them, and calls in question any thing respecting them, they reveal their great spiritual pride, their arrogance, their ambition, their disposition to lord it over God's heritage; or their true spiritual ignorance. "The thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed," now this is often very striking to see; I have witnessed it in a great many cases in times of revival; and precisely similar revelations will be made, when Christ comes to revive his work in any given church or locality. How strongly the deep feelings and springs of action will come out. It will be said of such and such an individual - "What does he say?" "What, does he say so?" Things so unexpected will come out! Oft times let me say, individuals will be so searched that they will see their own rotten-heartedness, and other people likewise will see it. O! sometimes these revealings are terrible indeed! If I had time, it might be profitable and instructive to relate some of the multitude of facts that I have witnessed in revivals of religion, in illustration of what I am saying: terrible and even shocking things have been brought to light, and always will be under such circumstances.

When Christ comes to revive his work, he will bring iniquity to light by searching, preaching, and the power of the Holy Ghost. He will be a swift witness against them; there is no mistake; he "will be a swift witness when he comes to judgment against the sorcerers and against the adulterers." Yes, against the adulterers, for adultery will be brought to light; "and against false swearers;" false swearing will be brought to light; "and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages." Transgressions shall be brought to light; "the widow and the fatherless and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of Hosts." Every one of these things is often revealed and brought to light, when Christ comes to revive and purify the sons of Levi! The chaff is to be separated from the wheat; and the dross to be purged away from the gold and silver, and the corn and the metal are to come forth pure. A terrible searching this will be! A time of severe trial and sifting. But after this season of trial is past and things begin to settle down; "they shall offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness; then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years."

But he will not only do this with the church; he will also try the congregation, who are not professors of religion; and will bring a terrible searching to bear upon them, through his ministers, through his church, and by his spirit - he will bring home conviction to them, so that they shall understand themselves, and know the state of their own hearts!

A few remarks must close what I have to say this morning. In the first place, every one can see by looking closely at it, that these things must be true, of all revivals of religion. Now mark! I am speaking of revivals of religion; of Christ coming to revive his work, as spoken of in the text. Now if religion is to be revived, sin must be put away; if sin is to be put away; there must be a conviction of sin; and if there is to be a conviction of sin, searching must be applied. This must be a first step to a revival of true religion in any community - for mark! A revival implies a necessity for a revival. If the people are in a declining and lukewarm state, then of course they want a revival,

and before they can be revived, things must have a terrible searching. Again: it must be true, as every one can see, that the searching must begin in high places; that there will be, and must be, searching among those who are to be made instrumental in searching others, thus carrying the work forward. Rely upon it, that when any reformation is to be made, it will commence with the ministers; it must be so, for if any change is made for the better, in any church, those, who are to be the instruments of carrying it on, must be prepared for their work. Again: many persons have no just conception of what constitutes a true revival of religion; and so when Christ commences a revival, they begin to be surprised. They often think that such a terrible state of things as is manifested, where such a work is begun is evidence of anything else than the Spirit of Christ among the people. Thus it was when Christ came among the Jews, and therefore, they could not see in Christ a likeness to the Messiah, whom they expected. Now, let me say, it is always so, where people want reviving - they are surprised, because they are not aware that they are so much out of the way: therefore when such means are adopted, they will say, these are not the kind of means that were needed. Of course, if they knew what they wanted, and if they were aware of their true condition, they would not be in the circumstances in which they are; but they are not aware of their true position, and their real wants. If it was left to them, they would universally do something else, than that which Christ sees is needed. But when they complain of the means which is adopted, and you ask them what they think they want, they can not tell! They do not apprehend their true position, and their real wants. Therefore Christ always comes and takes them all aback and surprises them. He sees they need reviving, and therefore he searches them by his ministers, whom they will sometimes rise up against, oppose and denounce.

If persons would but consider deeply what is always implied in the necessity for a revival, they would see, that just those means must be used which, if they are in need of a revival, they do not desire, otherwise they would not be in such a state. The difficulty is in their own hearts. Their hearts are wrong. Now if their hearts are wrong, they do not desire that thing which God says they want; consequently when he comes to revive them, he will take such a course as will greatly shock their prejudices, for mark me, if he did not shock their prejudices, he never would revive them; if your prejudices, I say, are never shocked, you will never be revived - never! Universally to shock prejudice is the very first thing done towards a revival! He universally takes them aback, in order to make them see that they are not going right. This should always be understood, and always counted upon by those who stand upon the watch towers; those who stand upon the high places of Zion, that if they ask Christ to come, he will give them a terrible searching; this is absolutely necessary, and I say should be remembered. I have often had occasion to say to ministers, with whom I have been labouring as an Evangelist, "I fear there is something coming, that will make the ears of the people to tingle; I am afraid there is something that God will search out; take care lest there should be some terrible revelation." Now when pastors know that any evil thing exists, let them apply themselves to search it all as before the light, and bring every soul to repentance. The searching will open men's minds, but let pastors not be afraid; let them stand fast: let them understand that their work is to purify and purge the church from dross and chaff: and in the prosecution of this work, they must expect that those who are at ease in Zion will be afraid and terror will surprise the hypocrites. But these things must be done.

Let me say again; it will often come to pass, of course, indeed uniformly, that where a revival has been commenced, persons who have kept up a fair outside, and deceived people, will then begin to be exceedingly restless and uneasy and will manifest a degree of opposition that from their profession was not to have been expected. A revival of religion will uniformly find out such people as these and bring them to their proper level, and make them understand themselves, and other people also will not fail to understand them. Sometimes I have known the most striking cases of persons ,who, it was supposed, would favour a religious movement, turn very restive, and find fault with this thing and that thing, and with the manner and the matter of this one, and of the other. Now this is to be expected; because if they are out of the way, this will be of course. If such is their condition, their hearts need be broken and searched, and it is not to be expected that this will be gratifying to them, or what they wished for.

Again: persons, who have seen revivals of religion, know what to expect in them, and they don't therefore want a revival. They dread the searching! And why should they not dread it? They are afraid! They may well be afraid. I have known ministers sometimes afraid, either for themselves or some of their people; they dreaded the disclosures of the rotten state of many among them.

But let me say again: impenitent sinners, who have committed crimes and are averse to making restitution, will dread a revival.

Once more; many persons who have hopes in which they have not much confidence, will have their hopes tried. There are many persons hold on to a hope when they can just barely hold on to it; they find it difficult to hold on at all; they have so many doubts and misgivings - and so much reason to doubt. I am convinced that those doubt most who have the greatest reason to doubt! Cases are very rare in which persons doubt of their hopes, who have not good reason to doubt. Now persons who have hopes in which they have but very little confidence are not willing to have their hopes tried, to have them brought right into the crucible; they will therefore feel wretched when a searching commences, that will be likely to severely try their hopes.

But this leads me to say again: hopes that are really good at the bottom must be tried also. Those whose hopes are good, have need to be tried that whatever is wrong may be removed. Christ therefore brings the fire to bear upon them, and bring their hopes to the proof, and such will come forth from the furnace "rooted and grounded in love." Some have been guilty of crimes; these will be searched out. Perhaps crimes against the law, or against society. Most disgraceful things have sometimes been discovered, and made public, and sometimes the individual has been brought to repentance. Oftentimes when Christ comes to purify, it will appear as if the Church was about to be torn in pieces. I have often seen this myself. Just in proportion as professors of religion get into any false peace, it will seem, when a revival commences, as if everything was going to pieces. Don't be afraid, Christ is at the helm! Don't be afraid, I say of any such result as the church going to pieces; only continue to pray, and put every soul in the crucible, let every soul be thrown in; every one must be tried and searched; hold steadily on, let the fire try and search them to the bottom. It will do the people good.

Once more: oftentimes it will be found in revivals of religion that this will occur in congregations, some will go away; they can't stand it; they won't give up their idols. Some, I say, will go; but generally where one goes, twenty will come! When the

minister goes on searching and sifting, it will sometimes produce great changes in a church and congregation; and mark! it is necessary that the worldly element should be put out, and therefore, such changes are necessary. Sometimes I have observed that when the worldly element has got into a church, it diffuses itself like leaven, till almost the whole church becomes possessed with a worldly spirit. Now Christ comes to work the worldly element out; and it is curious what means he will sometimes take to work it out. No matter what outward form it puts on, he will work it out of the church in one way or another; some he will bring to repentance, and he will greatly change the position and relations of others; instead of being high in the estimation of the church, they will become low, and some who are low will be elevated. Views will be changed of the spiritual character of many of the members; some will be greatly mortified; great changes will be introduced. These things, and such things as these may always be expected when Christ comes to revive his work. "He is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." Some will fall and some will rise. Great changes will occur, but they will be all for good.

Again: and I hasten to close what I have to say this morning revivals of religion are designed by Christ not only to sift, purify, strengthen, and settle the church; but they are designed also to tell upon impenitent sinners who live around them for Christ works through the church upon the world, consequently, they are sealing times, harvest times, when multitudes are gathered in.

Now, let me ask, my brethren, have you had any indications of Christ's coming to you? Have you found that the Master, whom you sought, has come to his temple? Have you many evidences of Christ's appearing among you? How many of you have been searched? Have you been thrown into the crucible? Have the things that I have briefly noticed, and which are contained in my text, been seen among you? If so, then you know that Christ is in the midst of you.

Once more: oftentimes persons are looking for a revival of religion in an exactly opposite state of things to that which really constitutes a revival of religion. They want Christ to come in such a way as not to disturb anybody they can not suffer any excitement! No excitement? Can a backslider be reclaimed without being excited? Never! Can a sinner be converted without excitement? No! Never! And no church ought to expect it.

But once more, and then I have done for this morning. Those that can not abide the day of his coming here, how shall they abide the day of his coming hereafter? If you do not expect his coming or do not profit by it, or can not stand the searching, can not abide his coming to promote a revival of religion, what will you do when he comes to judgment? If you can not bear the searching light of truth here, O what will you do when you stand unveiled in the presence of the solemn judgment under the blaze of that glory, from which the seraphim turn their faces, and cover them with their wings?

6. THE INFINITE WORTH OF THE SOUL

“For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” - Mark 8:36

I heard of this text being proposed once to a great man who was celebrated as an accountant, but who was neglecting his soul. A friend of his stepped into his counting house with this important question for him to solve, as a question of loss or gain. “Is it not a question in which you yourself are vitally concerned? If it were not,” said the friend, “I would not thrust it upon you.” It was said to be instrumental in the conversion of that important personage’s soul. In further remarking upon this subject I propose,

I. To notice the worth of the soul;

II. That nothing can be really good to a man who loses his soul;

III. That whatever he may gain, if he lose his soul, everything else will be but a curse to him.

Instead of gaining anything, if he lose his soul, even were it “the whole world,” it would be of no great value, on the contrary, it would be a great curse. But how shall I speak of the worth of the soul? There is no question on which I ever attempt to speak, which makes me feel so much at a loss, and that not because there is nothing to say, but because there is so much to say; not because the subject is void of interest, but because it is in itself so surpassingly great, so infinite, that I always approach it with the fear of belittling it, rather than at all giving or having anything like an adequate conception of it. Indeed the text which I have read tonight is one that I always feel that I dare not preach upon. I never did preach upon it in all my life; because, as I have said, it always seemed to me that all I could say would only belittle the subject, so far does the value of the soul surpass all human conception. There are nevertheless certain things which, if a man will take the trouble to amplify, will enable him to form a much clearer conception of the subject than he otherwise would.

But let me say, to begin with, that it is admitted by all men that happiness is a good in itself - a thing desirable for its own sake. All moral agents everywhere regard it as a thing desirable for its own sake. This is a primary truth which everybody assumes, and consequently everybody at all times and in all places are seeking for it in one way or another. Enjoyment is what they are seeking; the desire after this, and the reckoning upon it as an ultimate good, is the main spring of human activity. Again, misery is regarded, by all men as an ultimate evil - a thing to be avoided for its own sake. These two things stand in direct contrast in men’s minds by a natural law. About these things there is - there can be no dispute. Everybody assumes them to be true, and therefore, everybody seeks to secure the one and avoid the other.

In the next place of course, everyone knows, who has a human soul, that it is susceptible of both these - that it is capable of both happiness and misery. By most men, the immortality of the soul is admitted. It seems indeed to be a truth known to men to the necessity of their own nature; they never doubt it, unless they begin to speculate as to the truth of that which they know by their own nature. When they do

this, they call into question things, which they are so created as naturally to affirm and believe; the immortality of the human soul seems to be one of these things. So strongly do they assume this, that very few cases are recorded in which men on their death beds have believed themselves to be about to pass into a state of annihilation; there have, however, been some few cases of this; but, mark me, this is not the unsophisticated language of nature itself. Those who have not sophisticated themselves by doing violence to their own intelligence, have, by one of its natural laws, the belief that the soul is immortal. Go to the savage child of the forest! He believes that after death, he will go into a region of boundless hunting grounds comprising, to him, every element necessary to constitute a state of felicity; he has thus an idea of his own immortality and of the immortality of the souls of all men. More than this, the Bible abundantly and clearly teaches it, but I have not time to go into this department of the subject. As a Christian congregation, I shall assume that you believe it, and shall therefore content myself with taking up a few points to induce you to contemplate, as well as the shortness of the time permits, the infinite and incomprehensible value of the human soul.

The soul's capacity for enjoying happiness or enduring misery, must be an ever increasing one; thus it is able to enjoy or suffer more as it progresses in existence; this also, is a thing which we very well understand and know to be true. Now there is no doubt that men are capable of enjoying or suffering much more than mere animals, or that adult persons are more capable of enjoying or suffering than little children. We know from our own consciousness and observation that it is a law of intelligent mind that their capacity for happiness or misery is a continually increasing capacity. The infant has very limited sources of enjoyment; all seems physical; its evil is bodily pain, and at first, it knows nothing whatever of pain connected with thought of remorse on the one hand, or of pleasure on the other arising out of remembrances. It is like a little animal - the gratification of its appetites produces pleasure, while physical pain of course produces misery; but as its mind develops, sources of pain and pleasure multiply continually. As soon as it comes to have thoughts, from its very nature these thoughts are the cause of pain or pleasure. Just as the intellect develops itself in all its departments, sources of happiness are thrown open; the capacity for enjoyment is enlarged on the one hand and for misery on the other. The little one comes by and bye to know his parents and those around him, and the smile of his mother is the source of happiness, while her frowns are productive of misery. Everything with which it becomes acquainted opens up new sources of pleasurable or of miserable emotions; just in proportion as it progresses in knowledge, these sources are multiplied. If virtuous, his increase of knowledge enlarges his happiness; the very laws of his own mind - the lecture as it were, which God has inscribed within him increase his enjoyments; and just in proportion as he avails himself of these means, his capacity for enjoyment becomes greater and greater. Perhaps he is converted while yet a mere child, and grows up knowing more and more of God and his government as he proceeds, till at length he launches into the eternal world; onward and onward he goes, learning more and more of everything which can increase his enjoyment, and increases in his capacity for enjoyment forever and forever.

But mark; the Bible informs us that men's happiness or misery shall be *unmixed* in a future world; that is, if persons are happy at all in a future world, they will be perfectly so. It will not be a mixed condition as it is here; there, happiness will be unmixed,

complete, ever growing, and just so will it be with the misery of those who abuse God here - their misery will be unmixed and eternally increasing. To the one there remains no more misery - to the other no more enjoyment.

But again, this enjoyment or misery must, from the nature of the case, be ever increasing in all respects. First, it increases in *quantity* by reason of its continuance. Supposing the degree to remain stationary - that the individual got no more misery or happiness to all eternity - yet the *amount* would be constantly increasing from the very fact of its continuance by the law of mind, to which I have adverted, and from the nature of the case. Secondly, the degree of either happiness or misery becomes the means of producing happiness on the one hand, and misery on the other. Constantly accumulating knowledge will constantly increase happiness. Happiness or misery must constantly increase as the capacity of enjoyment or suffering is perpetually increasing. This is the inevitable result of a natural law. The mind must have new thoughts continually - it must know more of holiness and the nature of sin, and of all the reasons which forbid the one and promote the other, and thus, of course, the misery will increase with an increasing consciousness of guilt. But I need not dwell on this part of my subject.

Reflect a little, and endeavour to form some kind of conception of *what endless duration is*. Look right at it, for a moment, and try to attain to some comprehension of the infinite value of the immortal soul. It is to live to all eternity; it is to increase in happiness or misery forever and forever, there is to be no termination to this increase; it must be so by a law of nature. It is therefore easy to see that a period must arrive when every one of all the moral agents in God's universe will have either suffered or enjoyed more than all the universe have done together up to this present moment! Suppose tonight it could be computed how much happiness has been enjoyed by all God's creatures from the first moment of their existence to the present; the amount of course, would be great - utterly inconceivable to us; it is beyond our conception and we can not conceive a bound to it; but yet, as the happiness of each soul is, as we have seen, incessantly increasing, a period therefore, must naturally arrive when the aggregate of its single enjoyment shall be equal to all that has yet been enjoyed in God's whole universe. But even this is but the beginning.

In fact, this is not all; the period will also arrive when each individual shall have enjoyed a hundred, and a hundred thousand times more than all the universe has enjoyed up to the present moment. Go right on from here; the time must come when every individual who is happy, will have enjoyed myriads and myriads of times more than the highest arithmetic in the universe can calculate; for, observe, it is ever increasing, and if it increases ever so slowly, what then?

Suppose a being is to be employed in removing the entire universe of matter by a single grain of sand at a time. Let him take only a single grain in a thousand years, occupy another thousand in his journey, another thousand there, another in the journey back, and after the expiration of a fifth thousand set off with another grain, till he has thus removed the whole of the globe on which we live. Let him take a million instead of a thousand years, and add to this globe the whole of the material universe, still an immortal being could do it, there is plenty of time to do it. Every one of you, remember, must live long enough to do this again and again, and yet be no nearer the

end of your existence - *you will even then not have a moment the less to live!* All this time you will be either perfectly happy or perfectly miserable.

It is easy to see, moreover, that the time must arrive, when each one of God's creatures now existing shall know more, have more experience than all the universe of creatures yet have had. Every moral agent in the universe, at some moment of his existence, will be capable of more enjoyment, or of suffering greater misery, than all the universe of creatures are now capable of enjoying or suffering. Think of that! Just think of a mind whose capacity for enjoyment knows no bounds, and the law of which is everlasting development! Look at such a soul as that! What? Fixed under an unalterable law of everlasting development, running on and on as long as the Almighty Creator exists! Just think of the infinite and utterly incomprehensible value of a soul so constituted - capable of an amount of joy or sorrow so utterly outstripping all finite conception!

Suppose we take any child that is here tonight; when that child has gone forward so far in existence, that he has absolutely enjoyed or suffered more than all the creation of God has done up to this time, why he has not got one particle the less to enjoy or suffer than when he began; he is not the slightest possible particle nearer the close of it than at the earliest moment. Suppose he is happy, the time will come when he will know more of God, and have more experience of his government - when he will have lived longer than the entire created universe now has - and when he can look round and say, "my age is now greater than the aggregate age of all God's creatures previous to my birth; I am older, have more experience, have enjoyed more than all had before I was buried." What then? Why he will live on and on, and on and on till he has enjoyed myriads and myriads of times more and more and more until all finite conception is overwhelmed and swallowed up. But has he any the less to live or enjoy after all this? Oh, no! Why he has only begun, and he is no nearer the end of his existence than at the very first moment, for it has no end; he rolls onward and onward and onward on the tops of the waves of eternal life.

But reverse the picture. Shall we dare to look upon it? The period will arrive when, if unhappy, you will be able to say, "I have known more sorrow, remorse, bitterness, and agony than all the creatures in God's universe had when I came here." What then? Let him go on and multiply this to any possible extent till he can say, "Why no creature, that existed when I began to suffer, could then have conceived of the amount of misery that I have now suffered, and yet, I am no nearer the termination than when I first came here." Indeed the mind is wholly swallowed up in the contemplation of so incomprehensible a subject. Who can understand or conceive anything of eternal existence? - of what it is, to roll on and on, through an endless cycle of years, in happiness or misery, with a mind capable of the keenest enjoyment and of the most intense anguish forever and forever. Individual capacities in this world are extremely diversified; take for example that little child; it weeps, but while the tears stand on its little cheeks, its mother smiles, wipes them away, and it drops quietly to sleep. By and bye, it grows up and becomes a philosopher, it has read, studied, thought, and violated the law of God. Now remorse begins, but he wanders on in error and crime, and ascends the heights of science, as Byron did, looking down from those heights with a kind of disdain upon the ignorant multitudes beneath him. But the more he knows and the more he has abused his knowledge, the greater is his capacity for misery, till by and

bye, although he sits on a high elevation of knowledge, he is racked with the keenest agony - an agony which an ignorant mind knows nothing about. There are opened in his bosom springs of the most intense misery, with which, in his earliest years he was perfectly unacquainted. Every step in the scale of intellectual development has only opened up the floodgates of wretchedness upon his soul. See him grow pale and wretched, till at length he curses the hour which brought him into existence. But if he could only escape from his own recollection - if he could only escape from the gaze of his murdered hours, opportunities neglected - what a blessing it would be to him! But mark, there they all stare at him - all his sins, his talents and acquirements troop around him to be his tormentors forever and forever.

But I pass in the next place to say, that nothing can be a real good to a man who loses his own soul. Happiness is the ultimate good, as everybody knows and admits, and all things are valuable to us in proportion as they contribute to this result. If we are deprived of happiness, nothing can be a real good to us. Anything which can not be made subservient to our happiness is of no value to us. That, which men at present look upon as a good, they will ultimately see, from their present abuse, has become a curse; for the misery of a state of future punishment must be unmingled; their existence will therefore be an unmingled curse.

This leads me to say again, that everything man may gain, if they lose their souls, must be a curse. Their very existence will be a curse - their knowledge will be a curse. The less knowledge the better; even should they be deprived of consciousness altogether, it would be an infinitely less evil than the retention of it. Every gift they abuse will be an ultimate evil. When they remember their comforts in the midst of their misery, will it not tend to increase their unhappiness? Every enjoyment they have had will be an ultimate source of increasing anguish. Sinners, for example, who abuse the gifts of Providence, will have to suffer for it in this sense - God will call them into account for every one of them. God ought to do this. If they have had temporal enjoyments here, the very recollection of them will be a source of additional suffering there. It is therefore madness to neglect the soul for anything else. If the soul is saved it matters not what else is lost; for after all, the soul and its enjoyments is the only thing of real value. If the soul is saved, what matters it what is lost in securing it?

Let me speak to the poorest man in this assembly - you look perhaps on the riches and luxury of those above you in society. You, perhaps, envy their enjoyments; but have you reason to do so? Look at this; suppose that your soul is saved, what will it matter to you a thousand years hence, whether the few days you live here, you were rich or poor? You can look back, perhaps saying, "When I lived in London I was very poor, and had to work very hard, and sometimes did not know how to provide for the wants of my family." But would you then regard those sufferings as an evil? No, indeed; you would see they had all been for your benefit; your soul was saved, which secured you all conceivable and all possible good: but if, on the contrary, your soul had been lost, what would it matter if you had literally gained the entire world? If your soul is lost, of what use can anything else be to you? Banished from the presence of the Almighty and the glory of his power, how could you enjoy anything? The moment you die, you have received all your good, if you have lost your soul, and all the rest is unmitigated and unmingled evil.

But let me say once more, the salvation of his soul is the great business of a man's life; his great errand in this world is to secure his own salvation and that of as many as he can. Why, who does not know this - than as eternity is longer than time, in just so much is the soul more valuable than all that relates to this world. In short, nothing is valuable except in-so-far as it contributes to this end; and everything ought to be made subservient to this, but what is perverted is worse to us a great deal than if we never possessed it. To seek present enjoyment then, even if it were perfect, at the expense of our soul, were infinite madness. But *perfect* enjoyment in this life is an utter impossibility. Oh! sinner, suppose you live two hundred years; and suppose, moreover, that your enjoyment actually is perfect, if you lose your soul, what an infinite loss it would be; for this enjoyment, if abused in sin, must be more than compensated for by a proportionate addition to your future misery. The very breath you breathe, if you breathe it out in opposition to God, and die in your sins, will be charged against you in God's account. If you are abusing the blessings you possess, you had better far have been without them.

Again, suppose you should submit to the greatest possible earthly trials and privations, so as to deny yourself every earthly good for 200 years, what then? Suppose you spent the whole of the time in the most entire and universal self-denial - nay, suppose you had hung upon the cross in all the agonies of crucifixion - suppose you should remain there till the end of time, what then? How much more than compensated would you be by the retrospect in a state of everlasting felicity? For the joy which is set before you, can you not afford to endure the cross and despise the shame? When quite a young convert, I remember being very much struck by a resolution of President Edwards, which was to the effect, that all his conduct should have respect to the whole of his existence taken together, and that he would decide the propriety of any course by regarding it in view of his endless being. It struck me at the time as a resolution worthy of a child of God. How shall I regard my conduct ten thousand years hence, when I have grown so old that the universe has passed away with a great noise rolling up like a scroll - when the sun has gone out, and the material universe is scarcely remembered - how shall I regard it then? Suppose that the virtuous were completely miserable, and that the sinful were completely happy in this world; and that this life were to continue not only while it will, but to be extended for as many myriads of ages as it is possible to conceive of, still men would be infinitely mad to choose present happiness and future misery. But it is not so - it can not be so - the man who fears God enjoys indefinitely more, even here, than the sinner; for "the way of transgressors is hard." How much there is to embitter every day and hour of his existence. Ah! how little real enjoyment has a wicked man, even in this life! Poor creature! And is this the best he is ever to have? Oh yes, this is the best, poor as it is, and mingled as it is with bitterness! What infinite madness! There is no profit at all; it is only an appearance of profit for a few moments - a feverish excitement which will react and render the misery the greater.

A few remarks must conclude what I have to say, and the first remark is this - how little men think of the infinite value of the human soul and what eternal life and death is! How little is this realised, even by those who profess to believe the Bible! Now is it not one of the greatest of *all* wonders, that men so generally admit that this life is short, and that it may close at any moment, they know not when; and yet, with this admission on their lips, that if they die in their sins they must lose their souls, and that

they are liable to die in their sins at any moment - that they must exist to all eternity - and yet, infinitely strange to say! where can there be any such thing found in the universe? what so infinitely wonderful, as the little thought men give to the value of their souls? I have sometimes been obliged to turn my mind away from a thought so horrible, or it might have absolutely thrown my intellect off its balance. I have set my children before me, and reflected on their destiny, till I have said to myself, that if I should see one of them die in their sins, I should die myself immediately. What! The thought of one of my children losing his soul! It seems to swallow up everything else, and nothing seems to be of any importance in comparison with it. If their souls are saved, what else need they care for? I have often thought of how little consequence it was to lay up money for them. I have always let my children understand that, from the nature of my occupation, I have no money to leave them. I have told them that I have no desire to do so. I have given them as good an education as I could, and all I desire for them, is, that they may save their own souls, and the souls of others. To give them worldly goods, except with a view to extend their spiritual usefulness, always seemed to me to be the extreme of madness.

In looking at the anxiety of Christian parents to lay up money for their children, we see how much influence their conduct has in making their little ones worldly-minded - they come to think a great deal of wealth, station in society, the things of time, and almost nothing of eternity. When I have thought of that, I have asked myself thousands of times, "Can these parents believe that their children are immortal?" Is it possible that if they do believe it, that they love them? Is it possible they believe the affirmations of Scripture, and yet pay so much attention to their temporal, so little to their spiritual welfare?

For example: the Bible represents this world's good as a most ensnaring thing and that it is an extremely difficult matter for a rich man to be saved; it everywhere warns men against efforts to enrich themselves and their offspring; but I have remarked that very many persons act as if the exact opposite of this had been declared in the Bible - as if it had said that prosperity in this world was essential to eternal life. The good things of this world are not, however, to be despised; but when they are allowed to stand in the way of securing the salvation of the soul, the madness is absolutely infinite.

Let me now address myself to such of my hearers as sustain the parental relation; my dear friends, how have you regarded this subject in relation to your own children? How important it is that you should estimate rightly the value of your children's souls - that you should appreciate the dangers of their position, and the duties of yours; if these things were rightly considered, they would set your hearts on fire with zeal to secure their salvation. Once more. Let me remark how infinitely different God's judgment is from ours. We call those happy who are wise to get money, and who are successful in the acquisition of it, and you envy those who rise in rank and station. Ah! the penetration of such is not very deep. How infinitely different will you think of it a few years hence! when the curtain drops and you depart, less than a single hours experience in eternity will convince you which would have been the best for you.

Suppose the spirits of those who have gone before you could appear to you in the flesh and communicate with you, what a tale would they unfold! But the veil between time and eternity has been drawn down closely. All that we absolutely need to know has

been revealed to us; and if he receive not Moses and the prophets, neither should we one risen from the dead; for if you reject God's testimony, you will have infinitely more reason to reject the testimony of one from the dead. Sinner! *how long* do you mean to neglect your soul? You don't *always* mean to neglect it. Ah! there is the stumbling block. I greatly fear for you. Suppose we should go tonight to one of the wretched inhabitants of hell and inquire, how came you here? "Procrastination was my ruin. I intended to repent; I never meant to die in my sins; but ah! in the midst of this I was cut off." Oh sinner, will you not attend to your soul now? Do you say you "Can't do it tonight?"

But you *can* do it tonight; for God would not command you to do it now if it were not in your power to obey him. But you do not in your heart believe your own objection. Suppose an individual were just now to have a direct revelation that he was about to die, and suppose that he should stand up and appeal to me as to what he should do - suppose also that I should reply, "Oh! it is too late now; you have not time!," would you not all rise up and exclaim, "He can! He can! He can!" And will you tempt God by making an excuse which you don't believe yourself? Suppose anybody should attempt to hire you on oath not to attend to your soul till after a certain period? How much would you ask, sinner? Why you would think it was the devil himself, if a man should come and propose such a thing to you.

I recollect a case of this kind, in which a sinner absolutely did hire another in this way. The sum was three dollars, and the man engaged not to attend to his soul for a given period. He took the money. The donor of it was a stranger, and he bethought himself, after he was gone, that it must have been the Devil in human shape. "Have I not sold my soul?" at length he cried out; and he cast the money away in the bitterest agony. Well might he feel shocked. You would be shocked if anyone were to make you such an offer. But Satan will not shock you; he will let you slide and slide along and along, while the unseen hand of death is preparing to toll your knell! Perhaps he is watching to see whether he can not persuade you not to attend to it just now, and eagerly looking to see whether you go home tonight neglecting it, and what else you will attend to first. What is there of which you can say, "Oh God, I must do this first?" Sinner! have you gone thus far along the path of life and neglected your soul till now? And shall this warning also pass unheeded?

But let me conclude by addressing a few practical remarks to the unconverted. Now, sinner, are you not afraid to go on in your sins? If you put it off tonight, tomorrow evening you will not be at the prayer meeting, but somewhere else; and next Sunday perhaps, you will not go to a place of worship at all. A father once, in writing to his son about a certain habit which he had contracted, after expostulating with him at some length, broke suddenly off," But enough, enough, I know I shall not ask you in vain; and I will therefore urge the matter no further, lest my doing so should appear a want of confidence in your love." And shall God appeal to you in vain? Where is your sense of right? of honour? or of duty?

Oh, sinner! I am ashamed to be obliged to present so many considerations! Am I surrounded by reasonable beings who know the relations to God? Am I standing here for an hour and a half to persuade you by an array of motives which would sweep away every thing but a rock, to lead you to repentance? Might I not blush that I am a

man, if I have thus to plead with you, or in fact, to suggest any other motive for your repentance beyond the fact that your not doing so is an infinite wrong to the Almighty?

Come to Christ, and say, “Oh, Jesus! thou hast bought me, I will be thine. Thou hast died for me, and purchased my life; and shall the life which thou has redeemed be given to Satan? No! no! as I am a man. No! as I have an immortal soul. No! as I belong to the government of God. No! as I hope for salvation. No! I dread to displease God, and desire to please my Saviour. Heaven beareth witness that I renounce my sins; and let God write it in heaven.” Are you not ready? Why not? Make up your minds now and forever, right here on the spot, in the house of God where the angels wait to tell the story, where the Holy Spirit breathes upon the people. What say you sinner, are you willing to convert over from Satan to God?

You must decide *now*, one way or the other; and if we could see what infinite consequences, in respect to persons here, are turning on that decision, methinks the congregation would wail out with agony to see what destinies are trembling on this momentous point! See that needle, trembling on its pivot! It must, when it settles, point either one way or the other to heaven or to hell. Sinner! such is your destiny. What do you say?

7. PURITY OF HEART AND LIFE

*“I will wash mine hands in innocence; so will
I compass thine altar, O Lord.” - Psalm 26:6*

In remarking upon these words, I propose to inquire -

I. What is implied in the resolution of the psalmist?

II. What is implied in keeping that resolution?

III. I shall show, that both the resolution and the keeping it are indispensable conditions of acceptance with God.

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN THE RESOLUTION OF THE PSALMIST?

We find the Psalmist among many other striking sayings forming and expressing such a resolution as this to God. I will read the connection in which this resolution occurs - “Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity.” Here you see, he invites God himself to sit in judgment upon his uprightness. “I have trusted also in the Lord; therefore, I shall not slide. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.” What a laying open of himself! What an unbosoming of himself before God! “For thy loving kindness is before mine eyes; and I have walked in thy truth. I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.” He did not sit down with vain persons, neither would he associate himself with those who dissembled before God. “I have hated the congregation of evil doers, and will not sit with the wicked.” By *sit*, here, is to be understood to mean *associate* with, to be on familiar terms, so as to imply fellowship with them. Then follows the language of the text - “I will wash my hands in innocence; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.”

It is very plain, from the connection in which these words stand, that this resolution implies, first, *an apprehension of the holiness of God; the absolute purity of his character*. The Psalmist, undoubtedly, clearly saw this; because to form such a resolution as this in any proper sense, always implies that the mind perceives the holiness and purity of God’s character, and understands it. Why should he form a resolution to cleanse his hands in innocence, unless he saw that it was an absolutely indispensable condition of approaching God! I remark again. It implies also a perception of the condition upon which we may approach him - upon which he will allow us to come into his presence. Doubtless, the Psalmist, not only had a conception of God’s holiness, but that God required him to be holy, pure, sincere, upright, in approaching him - to have “clean hands,” as the Psalmist here expresses it, if he expected to have any fellowship with God. It is worthy of remark, that the Psalmist says, that he had no fellowship with wickedness, that he did not sit with vain persons himself, that he did not go in with dissemblers himself; that he had nothing to do with mockers; and it would be very curious if he should say this of himself, and yet suppose that God would have anything to do with dissemblers, pretenders, mockers! The Psalmist felt that these things would be required of him, and that they became him; that if he would approach unto God, he must be able to say what he did say. Now if he himself refused to sit with the wicked, and to have fellowship with dissemblers; could he expect that God would accept such, and allow them to have fellowship with him?

Doubtless, he had a very clear perception of the holiness of God's character, for his resolution shows that he had been so contemplating it; and says also very plainly the real condition on which he could approach God and find access to him, and acceptance with him. Contemplating the holiness and purity of God, he mentions these several things as he seems to come nearer and nearer to God. As one after the other they seemed to loom up before his mind, he saw clearly that such things must be the conditions of an infinitely holy God accepting him. He would not accept the wicked himself. Would God then accept him if he went in with the wicked, and associated with dissemblers! He saw clearly that God could not accept him if he came with vile hands!

I remark again: this resolution implies, not only that he perceived the holiness of God, and the condition upon which he might have communion with him, and be accepted of him, but it implies also that he fervently desired communion with God's purity, with God's holiness; with God himself. It shows that he himself wanted to draw near to God; he viewed God's purity, so that it instead of driving him away from the throne of grace, had the effect of drawing him to it. His most anxious desire was to come very near to God, and crowd right up to his throne of grace, or why should he express himself as wishing to compass the altar of God, and declaring his intention to wash his hands in innocence, that he might be accepted of him.

It implies also that he was perfectly willing to give up everything that was inconsistent with approaching God in this way. He resolved to cleanse his hands, to wash them in innocence, and in this particular manner would he compass God's altar. Now observe, he saw the conditions, and was willing to fulfil them. He saw what God must, from his own nature naturally require of those that would come near to him - that they must come with clean hands, that he could not receive dissemblers, if they would not leave their sins behind them they could not approach the altar of God; but if they would leave their sins they might approach and find forgiveness - if they would bring their sins they must not come in. Every soul may come into his presence, and approach him, but they must not bring their sins with them, if they do, they can not be received. The Psalmist saw this, and he resolved to do it.

Again, it implies, of course, renunciation of all sin. He designed to approach God with clean hands. But observe, persons can not approach God with clean hands, in the sense that they never have sinned, but in the sense that they are resolved to renounce all iniquity for the time to come.

Once more, the resolution implies a solemn pledge of universal obedience to God. "I will wash mine hands in innocence;" implies, I say, the idea of universal obedience to God.

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN KEEPING SUCH A RESOLUTION AS THIS?

If the resolution is a mere feeling, it is not a proper resolution at all; nor if it is a mere wish, a mere desire; it must be a purpose of the mind, and a determination of the heart. But let me ask what is implied in keeping this resolution! The resolution is, "I will wash mine hands in innocence." As is usual in the scriptures, an inward state of mind is expressed by an outward act - washing or cleansing the hands. "I will wash mine hands in innocence." Now, certainly, he did not mean to say literally that he could simply

wash his hands, but his heart. Washing the hands, in this case, doubtless implies in the very first place - I will put iniquity away from my heart - I will renounce the spirit of self-seeking altogether - renounce from my deepest heart, every form of sin and iniquity- renounce sin as sin, and iniquity as iniquity. And here it should be remembered, that it is not enough for an individual to renounce *one* sin or one form of sin, but *all* sin and every form of sin - at least for the time being. Everybody can see that the mind can not reject *one* sin, because it is sin; can not put it away because of that particular quality - sin; and yet cherish some other form of sin - no man can put away one sin, as sin, without at the same time putting away *all* sin of every form and degree. The keeping of the resolution then, implies, that no iniquity shall be left, but that all shall be put away. Do you suppose that the Psalmist confined his idea to any outward act, and meant to say that he would simply reform his outward life in certain respects? Would that be to wash his hands in innocence? What say you? If he had put away *great* frauds, and retained *little* ones? If he had put away forgery, but retained little petty thefts in his business transactions? Would that have been to wash his hands in innocence? Judge ye! If a man paid his debts to save his reputation, and yet took a penny out of every person's hand who came into his shop, would that be to wash his hands in innocence? Suppose that a man kept his word in great matters which would entirely come out before the public, but should keep all his affairs in such a position as to mislead the public; or should put an article in the window, marked such a price, and when people came in, should not sell that, but an inferior article at the same price? Would that be to wash the hands in innocence? Now, suppose I had time to go over all these little tricks with which the business world is so full, should we not see a great deal to condemn? and should we not see a very little washing the hands in innocence? We look into business transactions and we see cheating, over-reaching, pulling and grasping on all sides. The resolution then to wash the hands in innocence, implies that there shall be no stain, no sin left, none of your tricks, none of your management, none of your little petty actions in palming off goods for what they are not - no sin whether in heart or life.

Let me say again: the keeping the resolution to wash the hands in innocence, undoubtedly implies also, repentance for past sin, for unless persons repent of past sin, they do not cease from present sin - that is certain. Now suppose that a man breaks off from any actions which he formerly practiced, but does not repent of them, what does he do? Why, he continues to cleave to the iniquity still! He does not show it in his outward actions, but not having repented of it, it festers in his heart; it is like a fire covered up, there it is, although it does not for a while gush out - the iniquity is there, though it does not bubble up. If there is no repentance, there is no washing the hands in innocence. But let me say again: the keeping the resolution to cleanse the heart, implies further. Self-examination in the light of the rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." This is the rule that God has laid down - "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Thou shalt regard his interests as thine own; thou shalt regard his feelings as thine own; thou shalt regard his reputation as thine own. Now observe, of course, the keeping of the resolution to cleanse the hands, implies that the mind looks at the rule in view of which the hands are to be washed, the life and the heart purified. Here is the standard! No other standard than this is God's standard! Now observe - unless the mind looks at that, it will never renounce sin. A man therefore, who would approach God with his hands cleansed, must ask himself, have I done, or am I doing, in all things, as I would wish to be done by? Such a man

requested a favour of me! Did I grant it, as I should have desired him to grant it had I been the petitioner? Did I grant it, as I might reasonably have expected of him? I dealt with such a man, did I deal with him just as I would have him deal with me? Such a man wanted money, I had some, did I let him have it just as I could have expected or wished him to let me have it, had I been placed in his circumstances? Such a man's character was assailed in my hearing, did I seek to vindicate his character, just as I would have had him do in reference to mine? I heard a story about him that I did not believe was true, did I deny it and resent it, as I would had it been told about myself? Did I feel for his character as I should have done about my own? Such a man is in difficulty, do I sympathise with him as I should wish him to sympathise with me if I were in his condition? Ah, I wish I had time to enter into many of these things in the sight of this rule, "Love thy neighbour as thyself." If we were to take this rule and set it before ourselves, and then go into the various business affairs of life, we should see a vast number of things that require amendment. Let me urge each one of you to take this rule, and see wherein you have transgressed it, and say, I must repent of all these things, which are not merely transgressions of human laws, but of the perfect law of God. I must repent of these things, and what is more, I must, as far as possible, set about making restitution. There is no honest repentance without this. Suppose a man were to rob you of a hundred pounds, and then say, "I am very sorry," but nevertheless keep the money, what would you think of his repentance? Would that be to wash his hands in innocence? Suppose a man has slandered you, spoken evil of you, or has connived at others speaking evil of you, and when he has learned the truth, refuses to confess it to those whom he has misled - is that to wash his hands in innocence as becomes an honest man? You know very well that there is no more honesty in him than there is in the devil! Who does not see that this must be true? But you may say, is he not honest in reference to other things? I answer, no! What does Jesus Christ say himself? "He that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." The man that is unjust in the least, is universally unjust; he is not thoroughly honest in anything. Let me illustrate this. Suppose a man pays his notes to the bank, but behind his counter will take advantage of his customers in the matter of a few pence, will cheat every man that comes into his shop, as far as he can without danger to his business character. He is continually putting out his feelers, like a snail, to see how far he can go without danger to his reputation among men - is that man an honest man? No! there is not a particle of honesty about him: he is selfish and sinful from beginning to end! He pays his notes into the bank! Why? His business character would be ruined if he did not, and he would become a bankrupt. But go into his shop to make a purchase, and he will cheat you if he can. Is that an honest man because he pays his notes to the bank? No! There is not a particle of honesty in him. Now let me say; these are very practical ideas, and of great importance to be considered in a city like this.

I remark again: I said that the keeping of this resolution implies confession and restitution. Observe what is the rule by which confession and restitution is to be made; the golden rule - "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." "Love thy neighbour as thyself." Now observe, it ought to be universally known that confession must be made to the injured for the wrongs inflicted. Here let me make a difference which it seems necessary to make, between this confession and the confession insisted on by the Roman Catholics. They make a priest the depository of all confessions, but I speak now of making confession to the person who has been injured. Suppose you have slandered another, you ought to confess to him, or to the

person whom you have misled, by your statement concerning him. Such a confession is demanded by justice and our duty towards our neighbours. And it is self-evident that such a confession as this is demanded by God, who has said, "he that covereth his sin shall not prosper; but he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall obtain mercy." And again, "confess your faults one to another that ye may be healed."

But let me say again: a keeping of this resolution implies a taking up of the stumbling blocks, and a making everything right as if preparing for the judgment. Just suppose that we knew, that in one week the judgment was to sit and all the preparation we should be permitted to make must be made in that space of time! Would you not at once be thoroughly upright and honest? Well you must be as honest now as you would be then! To be sure, I do not say that you must take the same course now as you would then, in all respects, for if you knew that the affairs of the world were so soon to be wound up, you would not think it necessary to continue your worldly business any longer; and many other things that you ought now to do would not be needful then; but the keeping of this resolution implies that you be as thoroughly upright and honest now as you would be then, in making confession, and as far as possible, restitution. We must remove all stumbling blocks out of the way. Suppose we look around us and see sundry things which offend, and hinder the salvation of our fellow men, what must we do? What does Christ say? "When thou bringest thy gift to the altar, and rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift; first go and be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift." Do not offer it, for if you do it will not be accepted. Go first and remove the stumbling block and then come and offer thy gift. Here is the very principle for which we are contending laid down by Christ. Some men seem to suppose that the gospel dispensation is a very lenient one, compared with the Old Testament dispensation. The exact opposite of this is the truth. The New Testament dispensation is the same as the Old; but while the one related chiefly to the outward life, the other comes right home to the heart. Take Christ's sermon on the Mount, in which he tells you that unless there be obedience to the law of God in the heart, there is no obedience at all. He taught us also to exercise a forgiving spirit, or else when we prayed God would not hear us; unless we are upright and honest when we pray, and make our peace with those whom we have offended, we can not approach unto God.

But let me say again: regard to the rights of others in all respects is implied in washing our hands in innocence, including the payment of our debts and exact uprightness in all business transactions; not in the sense of compliance with human laws, but in the view of the great principle of loving your neighbour as yourself. Washing your hands in innocence, implies that all your business be transacted upon this principle. You can not really be honest except only when you love your neighbour as yourself, and regard his interests as you would your own, and seek his good as well as your own. Suppose a man comes into your shop for a certain article, and you knew well that you have not got what he wants; but you show him another, and say, that this is not exactly the article you wanted, but it is better than the one you inquired for, and it is the article most generally used, while at the same time you know that you are deceiving the man; you know it is an inferior article, but you say, though this is not exactly what you wanted, I guess it is better and will answer your turn quite as well; you will get it on to him if you can, no matter by what means. Now let me ask, is this being honest with God? Is this washing the hands in innocence? Is it indeed! O, the endless tricks of

selfishness, and the endless subterfuges with which men excuse themselves; and yet so much piety in the midst of it all - *selfish all the week, but mighty pious on the Sabbath!* Sometimes it is that persons would not on any account stay away from church on the Sabbath, but they would cheat you in their business on the Monday if they had an opportunity of doing so. Suppose a man comes into your shop and asks if you have such an article, and if you are not sure that you have, will you tell him so? will you say - I do not know that I have: I will look, but I do not think I have anything that will exactly answer your purpose. There is an article something like it, you can look at it and see if it will suit you. Now, will you tell him all that you know about that, and be right up and down with him? Or do you say that is not my business. Let me take care of myself. Your customer is ignorant of the quality of the article: will you be honest with him, or will you take advantage of his ignorance, and charge him more than it is worth? Perhaps he will barely get home before he finds out that neither the article nor the price were what they ought to have been. Suppose you say, well, I am seeking to get money that I may give it to the Missionary cause! Let me tell you that a man might as well fit out a pirate ship for the same purpose! You take advantage, lie and cheat, to get money for God! Well, when you have got the money so for God; just go into your closet, lay the money down, and say, "Lord, thou knowest how I got this money today: there was a man came into my shop and wanted a certain article; and I had not what he wanted, but I had one not so good, but I managed to get him to take it, and I charged him a little more than it was worth, because I wanted to give something to the Missionary cause!" Now would that be washing the hands in innocence? Can you serve God in such a way as that? Would an infinitely holy God accept such an offering? Judge ye!

III. BOTH THE RESOLUTION, AND THE KEEPING OF IT, ARE INDISPENSABLE CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD

Now let me here explain what I mean by the condition of acceptance. I do not mean that these things which I have mentioned are *grounds* upon which God will accept us. He will not accept us for these things, because after all, there is no satisfaction made for past sin - not at all: therefore, he can not accept us as if we had not sinned. While this resolution, or the keeping of it is not the ground of an acceptance, I say it is a condition, in the sense that we can not be accepted without it. Because if God were to accept us without this, he would do the very thing that the Psalmist himself would not do. The Psalmist declared that he would have no fellowship with iniquity, and would not go in with dissemblers, and shall you do so? No! Then I say this is an indispensable condition of acceptance with God.

It should always be understood then, that when we talk of persons being justified by faith, we always mean that faith implies repentance, making restitution, obedience and holiness of heart. The faith that takes hold on Christ implies all this. We are justified by faith; but it is the faith of obedience to God; the faith which leads to sanctification; the faith which works by love and purifies the heart; the faith that overcomes the world. Ah, the faith that overcomes the world, that's the faith to mark an honest man! The Bible describes the faith that justifies as the faith that overcomes the world. Look at that man, he says he has faith. Does his faith enable him to overcome the world? Why, it has not made him an honest man in his worldly business! It does not keep him from cheating! Is that the faith of the gospel? No, indeed! It is the faith that makes void the

law; and “do we make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yes, we establish the law.” True faith produces the very spirit of the law in the mind, and consequently obedience to it in the outward life. Do not let me be misunderstood, I am not advocating a system of self-righteousness. I am not saying that men may be saved by their own works, and denying that they are justified by faith; for this I maintain; but I maintain that the faith which justifies, is the faith which overcomes the world. Faith implies honesty with God and man. Faith implies uprightness of heart; and faith implies a cleansing of the hands. Beloved, *no man has faith that justifies him who has not faith that makes him honest*. If you are not honest, you have not faith; in God’s sense of the term, you have not the faith of the gospel.

But let me say again: this must be a condition of acceptance, for God would disgrace himself if it were not. We could not ourselves feel a respect for God if he did not make this a condition of our acceptance. He does not require that we should be saved by our own works, for that is impossible. He does not require us to undo the actions of our past lives, for that were impossible; but he requires us *now* to become honest, and all which is implied in that state of mind, sincerity, simplicity of heart, and confidence in him. Furthermore, let me say, if we could approach God, and be accepted by him without becoming honest men, it would not do us any good. If God was such a being that he could have fellowship with our sins, we should be wretched beings still. The fact is, beloved, there is no way in which the soul can be at peace with God, without its becoming like God. There must be written upon the heart of a man holiness to the Lord, before he can be at peace with God. There is a natural attraction between the mind of God and a good man, as there is between the sun and the planetary system; instead of our earth running in a straight line away from the sun, it is drawn round and round and round by the attraction of that planet. Just so it is with a good man and God. There is such a natural attraction between the good and the holy soul, and the God of infinite purity, that it is continually drawn towards him. The sun attracts the earth, and in a certain degree the earth attracts the sun, and thus the earth is carried round its diurnal and annual rotations. In a similar manner does God attract the soul of the good man, and the soul of a good man, in a measure, attracts God. The soul knows nothing about gravity in respect to this earth. The mind is not material, and if it was not tied down by the body, it would not go round with the earth, but would ascend to its author. Why, Christian, have you not found sometimes that there was such an attraction between yourself and God, as if your soul would almost leap from its body, or draw the body up with it to heaven. An eminent Christian lady once said, that at one time the attraction from God was so great, that it seemed to her as if she should go to heaven body and soul together.

I mention these things to show you, that when we speak of being drawn towards God, we are not merely using a figure.

But let me say further. Some people suppose that they are to be saved by imputed righteousness, while they are destitute of personal righteousness. Suppose you had imputed righteousness, what then? Suppose you were to get to heaven? that would be no place for you. Heaven would be hell to you. But let me assure you that you must have an imparted righteousness, and become pure in heart and life, ere God will accept you.

A few remarks must close what I have to say. The first remark I make is this - you are not accepted of God; if you have not conscious communion with him; if you do not find God in his house, in your closet, and do not enter into sensible communion with him. Again: you see from this subject why there is so little real communion with God in the church. For the best of all reasons - there is so little of the washing of the hands in innocence. Let me say again: many persons do not seem to understand at all that this is a condition of acceptance; they seem to suppose that somehow the gospel was designed to make men pure, but they do not understand what is implied in washing the hands in innocence, in casting themselves upon God for present grace and for future grace. Again: you have seen from this subject how abominable it must be to God for persons to pretend to love and serve him while they indulge in a worldly spirit and live a worldly life. I remark once more; you need not make some great and wonderful preparation - occupying months or years before you give your heart to God. Now suppose that every person in this house were at this moment willing to do as the Psalmist did, and were to come right out and say, "I will wash my hands in innocence" - what is there to hinder? We are soon to unite in prayer. Let the whole congregation then make one move toward the throne of grace! everyone make a move with his heart, and say, Lord, I give up all sin, and I do it now, and as soon as possible I will set about making everything right outwardly. In my heart *now* I renounce sin, all sin, I will now consecrate my heart, and wash my hands in innocence. Are you all willing to do this? Come along then! come along! every one. The veil has been rent, and the door has been thrown wide open, and no man can shut it against you but yourself. Will you then shut it against yourself? Will you refuse to enter? Be not so foolish; come now, come with earnestness and sincerity and God will accept you.

8. THE SINNER'S SELF-CONDEMNATION

"Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant." - Luke 19:22

These words are part of a parable, which is as follows - "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself kingly authority, and to return. And he called ten of his servants and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, "Trade with those till I return." But his citizens hated him and sent a message after him saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." And when he was returned, having received regal authority, he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds." And he said unto him, "Well, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." And the second came, saying, "Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds." And he said likewise to him, "Be thou also over five cities." And another came, saying, "Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow." And he saith unto him, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with interest!" And he said unto those who stood by, "Take from him the pound, and give it to him who hath ten pounds. ("And they said unto him, "Lord, he hath already ten pounds.") For I say unto you, That unto everyone who hath much, shall be given more; and from him who hath little, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me."

The purport of this parable is clearly this - "First, it is presumed that that which God requires of man is the right use of the talents committed to him. This is assumed throughout the parable. God expects this, and they make themselves entirely responsible, and without excuse, for not immediately obeying God. The very admission pre-supposes a knowledge of the duty devolving upon them. The fact is, they know themselves to be sinners, that they ought to repent, that they need a Saviour; and who would allow that he ought to repent if he had not sufficient conviction to see that he ought? Once more. In admitting that they ought to repent, men assume thus their *ability* to do so. They may deny it, but they believe it still, or they never would admit that they ought to repent any more than they would admit that they ought to fly.

Again: this admission shows that they themselves have no confidence in the excuses they make, that they do not suffice to justify themselves; and that they well know that not one of them will be had in respect, when things come to be seen in their true light; if this were not so they would honestly and confidently bring them forward in justification of their conduct. This is natural, and you will find it everywhere, from the smallest children upwards; wherever they really suppose themselves to have a good excuse, they will readily make it - they will deny their obligation whenever they honestly feel that they have a valid excuse. This shows conclusively, that when sinners admit their obligation to become Christians, they assume, in this very admission, that

their excuses are good for nothing. If they had but one really good excuse among the whole, they would rest calmly upon it, and at once deny their obligation.

Let me say again. These things also show that these people are in reality hypocrites, making excuses; for if they were not, they would deny their obligation; for if there were in reality any valid excuse for their conduct, they must plead it in justification. But they do not deny it; they can not do so without belieing their very nature; they can no more deny their obligation than they can deny their own existence. They virtually admit their own hypocrisy, in not doing what God tells them they ought to do, what they know and feel they are bound to do, and excuse themselves in a way that does not even satisfy their own consciences.

But I remark again. These admissions on the part of sinners, also show that they know very well that *God must condemn them*, for if not, *they must condemn him!* They condemn themselves, and they therefore assume that God *must* condemn them; for if he does not do so, they feel that he can not be just. Sinners themselves acknowledge their wrong-doing. They violate even their own standard of moral obligation. They sin against their own consciences, however stupid those consciences may be. They feel that, as God is a good being, he must condemn them; and if he does not, then their own consciences will condemn him.

Their admission shows again that in the deepest assumptions of their minds, they do justify God. The law of their own minds are God's witnesses, and stand up for ever to testify for him. So truthful are these laws of the human intellect that they will speak, and speak the truth. To be sure, there is no virtue in admitting what you can not honestly deny. There is no virtue in a man's conscience saying, what by a necessary and natural law, it must say and can not deny. True, the heart would bribe the conscience if it could, but the testimony of their nature for ever leaves them without excuse before God. These admissions show that they themselves know their pleas of inability, and every other plea is only a refuge of lies with which even they themselves, as I have said, are unsatisfied.

From these things we see why it is that sinners everywhere have such a fear of death - why they are afraid to die! Is it because they are afraid God is unjust? No. Is it because they are afraid that they shall fall into the hands of a cruel and relentless tyrant who will trample them down in their weakness, regardless of their merit? No! They are not afraid to meet God because they think him wicked, but because they know by the irresistible assumption of their own minds, that God has an awful account with them, and that they have no apology for their sins. They do not say, "Oh! I have a good excuse, I know I have; but God will not hear it. I know that I was born with such a sinful nature that I have a good excuse for my conduct, if God would only hear it; but he will bear me down with his power."

Is that the reason why sinners are afraid to die? No! that is not the reason; it is because they know they have done wickedly, and that they are without excuse. They are not afraid to meet God because they deem him unreasonable and partial, but because they are wicked, and he is good. That is the difficulty. They feel that goodness ought to be armed against them, because they have no possible excuse for their sins. It is often deeply affecting to sit down by the death-bed of a sinner who has gone on in sin for a long series of years without a serious thought in his mind; if you examine into the

workings of his mind, it is striking to see how many things after all, he has assumed. It is remarkable how many points of self-accusation present themselves in how many points his conscience is disarmed.

But again, it is absurd for any individual to acknowledge obligation, and still plead inability. If it be naturally impossible for a man to do a certain thing, consistency would lead him of course to deny his obligation to do it. It is not only an absurdity to acknowledge obligation and still deny ability, but it is an absurdity that no mortal, is, in reality, ever guilty of. Men may theorise about it, and think the contrary; but the principle is true and universal; there is no excuse to which it is not applicable. For if we have an excuse that is really a reasonable one, it is a justification - it sets aside the obligation, and the only proper way is instantly to plead the excuse and deny the obligation. The mind is true to itself, and always does do this; for if a man has a reasonable something that, in his own assumption, ought to justify him for doing, or neglecting to do certain things, it is a direct contradiction to say that he can possibly, at the same time, admit his obligation to do those things. The mind never does or can do this; and therefore, when men admit their obligation, they assume that God is reasonable in requiring it, and that it is not naturally impossible for them to do it.

But let me say again. The excuses with which men deceive themselves, when viewed in the light of their own admissions, is a glaring proof of the madness of their wickedness. How strange! Here is an individual admitting that he ought to obey God, and with the same breath excusing himself for not doing so! Does not everyone see the absurdity of admitting obligation and excusing yourself at the same moment!

Again. I know very well that sinners do not really consider what is actually implied in those admissions. Multitudes of persons here have followed these admissions saying - "Oh! yes, I admit that - I admit that there is a God, a right, a wrong, that God is good, and that I ought to obey and love him - that I have sinned and ought to repent and become a Christian and that I ought to *do it now*." But have you really considered what is implied in these admissions? you are naked, speechless, and without excuse in the presence of God!

I remark again. Though sinners deny, as they often do in theory, their ability to obey God, they know it, and while they admit they are sinners and have done wrong, their consciences convict them of wrong, and assure them that they might have done right. Now take any case whatever where a sinner has done that for which he condemns himself - he sees it is wrong - that he ought not to have done it. Now in that very case he assumes that it was possible for him not to have done it; he would never admit having done wrong in a certain case if he knew that he had no power to do otherwise than he did too. In any and every case where a moral agent believes he could not have done differently, he will justify the course he took. It is of no use for a man to pretend to believe that by outward circumstances he is irresistibly propelled along a certain track; God has so constructed his mind that he can not believe it. He may wind himself up in sophistries; still, however, his own nature will speak, out and tell him that it is a downright lie from beginning to end. Let him go and commit a crime and then try to justify himself if he can. He can not do it. Let him go and commit murder, or any other crime; he can not, for his life, conceal from himself his wickedness. He may bring up this doctrine of fatality, but it is of no use; he can not satisfy his conscience with it.

There is something within him tells him, "You are to blame. You ought to have done otherwise and might have done otherwise." This pursues him wherever he goes; there is always a sentinel from God, a witness which will speak out, and tell him that he lies just as often as he attempts to justify himself. See him go along in the dark! What is the matter with him? His hair stands up on end, what ails the man? Why does not a horse feel such terrors as this? Because he is not a moral agent, and has not got written in his mind those great facts which are written in the mind of man. See that individual try to persuade himself into the belief that there is no hell, judgment, or final retribution! There is, after all, within him that which causes an awful sound in his ear, and his soul, when he is in darkness and in secret places quakes within him.

Further, if sinners really and truly believed in their excuses, they would not admit the obligation and necessity of repentance. Take a man, for instance, who honestly believed he could not do better than he does, would he not at once tell you that he has nothing to repent about? He can not honestly tell you anything else. He meets you at once with a full and flat denial of his moral obligation. He would say, "God can not send me to hell for I do not deserve it. God can not, with justice, shut me out of heaven." Again, he would not be afraid to die. He would say, "Why do you think I am afraid to meet a God of justice? Not I. God has nothing against me. He has no right to have, and I am therefore not afraid to die." Tell him to repent and be converted. "I have no need," says he, "I am right already." If they sincerely believed in the excuses, they would no more condemn themselves than a windmill. If they really believed they were machines, their consciences would never be disturbed. But the fact is, men assume and know that they are not machines in any such sense as not to be free and accountable. They can never, for their lives, escape the conviction that they are both free and accountable.

Again. If they believed that men were machines, they would not blame the conduct of others. If you are sincere in professing this, if a man knock you, or take away your wife, your child, or any of your property, you can not blame him; for how can he help it? He is a mere machine. How could he help it? Why, if you really believe you are machines, you could no more blame a man for knocking you down in the streets than you could blame the arm of a windmill for knocking you down. If you are knocked down by the arm of a windmill, why not blame it? Because you can not assume that it was to blame; it is a mere machine, and you pick yourself up as well as you can and go away. But why blame a man, when according to this idea of yours, he is not the least more culpable? But can this infidel in his heart believe this? No! I say he can not. He can not show to mankind, or even to himself, that man is not a moral agent. It is a remarkable fact that this law is always true to itself; you could not for an instant think of blaming the windmill, but notwithstanding your theory, in your heart you blame the man, because after all, you actually believe that he is a moral agent. When infidels can carry out this absurdity practically - really admitting and feeling that a man is no more responsible for his actions than a windmill - then we have a right to believe that they think so, but not till then.

It is therefore of the greatest importance that all men should question themselves as to their own deep convictions. I love to sound, as it were, the deepest recesses of my own mind, to see what will come up - to trace back the logical connection of my own thoughts, admissions, in order to see what must lie as an eternal, necessarily known

principle in my own mind, by which I must be eternally judged. Oh! are men going to the judgment seat, the great white throne, when the Judge is to appear and take his seat, and all the universe shall tremble before him? What are the books to be opened! First, mark me, the Book of the Laws of your own nature, wherein by the pencil of inspiration, was written at creation itself the immutable law which enforced on you the knowledge of your moral agency, and responsibility to God. God will question first your own conscience, your deepest nature, for he knows its laws - and it will rise up and testify against you. You will carry this self-condemner with you into hell if you go, and it will never perish! Thus will Christ say - "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant."

Now, dying sinner, what is your remedy! What will you do when he says, "As for these men who try to excuse themselves, bring them out here, and slay them before me!" Now, do you say to yourselves, "well, if this is true, my case is hopeless?" Now you know better. The fact you are saying this is a mere shuffle of your wicked heart. Here is Christ that uttered this parable, who has committed to you this talent, and now he says, "Consecrate it to me. From this hour unroll the napkin!" Ah! but perhaps you have *spent* some of it! Have you? Indeed! then you are worse than the individual in the text, for he did keep all that was entrusted to him! Ah! how much of it have you spent? How old are you? Oh! see those grey hairs on you! Have you burned out life's lamp, and left nothing but a smoking wick? You have served the devil, then, all your days! Indeed! Then, when God comes, you can not even unfold the napkin and say, "here is the pound that thou gavest me." No! You have carried over all this money - all these powers all this time, and all this influence with which God did so kindly endow you, and gone over and squandered it in the service of his greatest enemy the devil! Have you, indeed?

Well, your case is a bad one! But mark me, dying sinner - can you believe it? notwithstanding this is even so, that bleeding hand is held out, and Christ is saying, "Come! Come! Come! All things are ready, and always have been." But now will you come to Christ and consecrate the little remnant that is left? How much is then left? Some of you are young, and have still much time before you, in which you may do something to promote God's glory. But do you wish to serve the devil a little longer? Now does not this look to you ineffably mean in you to speculate on the chance of sinning a little longer, and yet being saved? Ah! does not God's keen eye see that thought? Why not at once come right to God and say, "Lord, here I am - I can not undo what I have done - I can not go back to the beginning of my moral existence - but I will come now, and O Lord Jesus, I will devote my all to thee - body, soul, influence, health - all I have and am, and by thy assistance, shall henceforth be consecrated to thy service, in helping forward that great work of love which I have been hitherto hindering by my sin."

9. REFUGES OF LIES

“The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.” - Isaiah 28:17

A refuge is, of course, a place to which resort is had in time of distress; a place of protection and security against danger. A hiding place, has also attached to it much the same idea - a place in which an individual secures himself against danger. The figure used in the text is a hailstorm, a sweeping hailstorm that carries all before it, even the places of refuge into which people have run for shelter from its desolating power; and so great is the flood that it fills up all the low places, the caves, the hiding places, to which they have betaken themselves.

The connection in which these words are found is very simple: they were addressed by the prophet Isaiah to the Jewish church; who were, of course, professors of religion, professing to be saints. At the ninth verse he says - “Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, and there a little; for with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people. To whom he said, this is the rest wherewith ye cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing that ye would not hear. But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared, and taken.” God was determined to leave them wholly without excuse; if they would deceive themselves, they must bear the guilt and punishment, he had by the mouth of his prophets set them “line upon line, and precept upon precept. Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem” - that is the religious rulers of those days - “because ye have said we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement.” They thought they were sure of their salvation; that they were God’s people; they regarded themselves as being justified and accepted in so high a sense that they were ready to say, “we have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement.” “When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves; therefore, thus saith the Lord God, behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in it.” A figure representing the character of their righteousness - their religion upon which they placed so much dependence - it was like a bed “so short that a man could not stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.” Thus their religion which they depended upon was utterly inefficient. “For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and

bring to pass his act, his strange act. Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong; for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts, a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth." The prophet delivers this very solemn message, and he warns the people from dissembling - for that is the true idea of "mocking" in this place - do not dissemble, he says, do not play the hypocrite, do not deceive yourselves; "for I have heard from the Lord God of Hosts, a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth."

My object this morning is to point out some of those refuges to which men betake themselves in our day, and show that they are really refuges of lies. It is oftentimes of great importance to have the attention called directly to those refuges to which men are in danger of betaking themselves, and to which too many do betake themselves. It is very remarkable to what an extent men will deceive themselves on the subject of religion. In connection with this subject, more than any other, we find the most remarkable cases of self-delusion: they are so very remarkable sometimes, as to appear altogether incredible, that men with reason and in possession of the Bible, should ever betake themselves to such refuges - should by any possibility make themselves believe that in the way they take, they are even likely to get to heaven.

I shall not have time to notice a great many of the present prevailing forms of error and sin, but I will advert to a few that are very common amongst men. The first thing that I notice, as a false refuge in which many indulge, is a selfish religion. And here let me say - I am sorry to be able to say it - that the longer I live, and the more acquaintance I have with men in general, and especially with professing Christians, the more am I afflicted with this conviction, that multitudes are perfectly mistaken with regard to the nature of religion - with great multitudes it is only a form of selfishness. A whole sermon might be occupied on this subject, but I must make only a very few remarks upon it. Let me say, selfishness in any form is in exact opposition to religion. It makes no difference as to the type which selfishness puts on. The question is, does a man make his own interest the object of pursuit? If so, such conduct is the exact opposite of that benevolence which Christ manifested, when he laid himself out for the good of mankind and the glory of God. He lived not to please himself, but to please God. And the Apostle says, "look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Indeed, everywhere, both in the law and the gospel, religion - true religion, is presented to us as disinterested benevolence. By disinterested benevolence of course I do not mean a want of interest in the great subject of salvation itself; but I mean that we should be religious not from any selfish motives or reasons, but that we should love God for what God is, and that we should love our neighbours as we love ourselves. Supreme devotion to God; to God's interest as supreme, and to his nature as a God of holiness. Where there is true religion it will manifest itself, in prayer, praise, and obedience. It will manifest itself with respect to God in efforts to please him, to honour him, and to glorify him, and an earnest desire to secure the love, confidence and obedience of all men. Now this must be naturally so. With respect to man, true religion will manifest itself, in simplicity of character, in seeking the good of all men, in caring for them as we care for ourselves; in caring for their interests as we care for our own interests; in caring for their salvation as we care for our own salvation; rejoicing in their prosperity as we would in our own, sympathising with their afflictions, as if they were our own - in a word, there will be a setting ourselves with a

single eye to promote the interests of mankind and the glory of God. Now this is the natural result of faith in Christ.

All selfishness is sin. But mark! it is not selfishness for a man to have a proper regard for his own salvation; but it is for him to regard his own salvation only and care not for the salvation of his neighbour. Suppose a man cares ever so much about his own salvation, but cares not for the salvation of his neighbour, this is supreme selfishness right on the face of it; and the more intensely anxious a man is about his own soul, if he cares nothing about the salvation of his neighbour, the more intensely selfish he is.

This should always be understood. Men that are very regular at the means of grace, and who make their own salvation a matter of deep concern, but who after all care little or nothing for the salvation of others, are deceiving themselves - trusting in a false refuge. Why it is perfectly plain in such cases that their religion is mere selfishness. For let me ask, where does the Bible allow men to make any separate, selfish interest their great object of pursuit? The teaching of Christ is, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and Christ himself acted upon this principle, and the apostles did so too; instead of making their own enjoyment, happiness, or salvation the great end of pursuit, they laid themselves out for the good of the world. And further, this is the true way for a man to secure his own salvation; by caring for the salvation of others. "Whosoever will save his life," said Christ, "shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Now it should always be remembered therefore, that all religion which terminates upon ourselves, or upon our friends, whom we regard as parts of ourselves, is a religion of supreme selfishness, and not the religion of the Bible - but the exact opposite. Now a great many persons fall into this mistake. They think that persons may be selfish in religion and be real Christians. They know that when men are worldly, engrossed with the world, why of course, that is not religion, but most admit that. But when individuals are found at the meeting, and found at the ordinance, especially, and are found saying their prayers, for themselves, and those who are parts of themselves - they are thought to be very pious! But this is a grand mistake; for after all they have not escaped the narrow circle of their own selfishness. Selfishness has changed its type, to be sure; it was once worldly, directed to some worldly object, glory, wealth, character, or something else; but some circumstance led them to change their course, and now they have begun to care about religion, but they are just as selfish now as when they were in the world - the form of selfishness is changed, but the principle is not removed. *Before, they speculated out of men; and now they attempt to speculate out of God!* They set themselves, before, to make something out of men; and now they set themselves to make something out of God! Instead of having come into sympathy with the benevolence of God; instead of having laid themselves on the altar, they are as selfish as ever. They are as selfish in seeking to secure their own salvation as they would be to secure a worldly estate. The end they have in view is a selfish end. I will tell you how it may be known, right on the face of it, whether a man, professing to be religious, is a selfish man. When he was engaged in worldly matters, his object was entirely self: how much he could make for himself - all his bargains and tradings were to this end. If he cared about a man's bankruptcy, it was for some selfish reason; in the hope that he would be able to make something out of it. Look at a selfish man in trade, he cares only for his own business; he does not "look also on the things of others,"

according to the apostle's injunction: while trying to please himself, and to benefit himself.

Now he becomes what is called a religious man: well, look at him now, is he any more really benevolent in his religion than he was in his business? Does he give any indications of his selfishness having been given up? Suppose he observed the business relations of society: why it was his interest to do so, he had a good reason for it. Look at the man when he has become a religious man, after he has been introduced to the church of God, if you please; and what proofs does he exhibit that he had undergone a radical change? Does he care for his own salvation? Is he labouring for the salvation of others? Is he anxious for others? Does he pray for others, care for others, rejoice with others? Does he mourn over the desolations of Zion? Has he come into full sympathy with Christ? Does he feel a deep concern for the souls that are around him? Does he care nothing for worldly things, only so far as they may be made the instruments of saving the souls of men? Does he pray for grace that he may be useful; that he may be able to save souls, pulling them out of the fire, and is he engaged in building up the true church of God? Now you can easily see if you have fled to a refuge of lies in this respect. Have you felt awakenings of soul when you have heard or read of the awful things that God has said about the wicked? Has his hand come near you, and stricken down a companion, a friend, a neighbour, and has your heart awakened from your dream of worldly mindedness? Have you been led to see that life is short and death is near, and that a solemn judgment is to follow? Have you understood the value of religion? and further, have you so studied its nature as to see that the starting point is a firm resolution in regard to the great end of your life? That to begin, you must renounce self, and live for God: if not, you are self-sufficient still, and know nothing about religion at all. Suppose that you are selfish in religious matters instead of worldly matters, what are you the better? There is no real difference, which you will see if you think of it. Selfishness has put on a new type, but the man is not new, and therefore you are none the better. Selfishness may often change its type. It puts on one form in the child, another in youth, and another in manhood. It is manifested in ambition, the love of fame, the love of character, the love of power, and so on. I might chase these things down from one stage to another, and selfishness would everywhere unfold itself. In almost every man's history we should find that at some period of his life it puts on a religious type, sometimes in youth, and sometimes in riper age. Observe, that against which I would warn you is this - making such a mistake as to suppose that religion at all consists in mere attention to religious things, but from selfish motives, always terminating at last upon self.

Let me say in the next place. Another refuge of lies to which mankind betake themselves is *religious impulse*. By this I mean they are excited purely by their feelings. This is a prevailing form of selfishness. This delusion consists in appealing to the feelings instead of to God's law as developed in the conscience and reason. Such persons as these think themselves very religious, because they feel deeply upon the subject. You will very often hear persons when spoken to on the subject of religion, say something about their *feelings* - they will tell you that they *feel* so and so; but take away their feelings and they have no religion. Now mark! I call this a religion of impulse, because it is not a religion of principle. These people become religious in proportion as their own feelings are excited; bring them under exciting means, and they are very religious. Nay! strongly excite them, and they will do almost anything; excite

and rouse their feelings, and you can carry them along. But let the circumstances subside which excited their feelings, and you see that they have not the root of the matter within them.

Now it is remarkable to what an extent we see the religion of impulse prevail - they are wonderfully religious while excitement prevails; but let it be swept away by neglect of the means of grace, and they will be very dull, and know very little about piety. If they do attend to means at all, it will perhaps be only the communion. Perhaps they will be superstitious enough to hold on to the ordinance - for there is a vast deal of this in every country that I have visited. Persons who are not really religious in their daily life, will yet make a point of appearing at the ordinance. Now it is very evident that such persons have no religion, and they make an ordinance of religion a refuge of lies in which they trust. They are like the Roman Catholics, who are very careful about attending to their Masses - they make attention to ordinances one of the prominent features of their religion. Now let me tell you right here - and you may set it down as a universal truth, that wherever the prominent feature of a person's religion is attendance upon ordinances, it is a sure sign that he is not a Christian. What are ordinances? They are the means of perpetuating certain truths in the world. The design of the Lord's Supper was to perpetuate the remembrance of the Lord's death. "As often," said the apostle, "as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." It is symbolic and commemorative: the same by baptism. They commemorate two great truths, and are very important as such; but no Christian makes them his religion. He is not sanctified by baptism and the Lord's Supper, but by the reality which they represent. He has got the reality in his own heart - he leans on Christ, he feeds on Christ, he loves to commemorate the ordinances of Christ; but mark! if he is not self-denying, prayerful, anxious for the salvation of others, and making efforts for this end, but merely cares about ordinances, he is not religious, but merely superstitious. Look at the Roman Catholics for example - and I do not wish it to be supposed that I mean to say no Roman Catholic is pious, for some of them may be, and doubtless are - who make ordinances the chief feature of their religion; and the same may be said of some other denominations to a considerable extent. They make so much of their mass, and of the ordinances, that instead of laying themselves out to do good, instead of leading holy lives, instead of being religious in everything, why their religion is confined to certain ceremonies. Now mark, this is an infinite mistake - religion is not a form, it is not an ordinance, it is a life. True religion must, from its very nature, show itself in a man's business as well as in his prayers. Nay! inasmuch as his business occupies six-sevenths of his time, the principal place in which to see his religion, if he has any - is in the daily walk of life. It will be seen there the most, if he has any.

Now if you see persons religious on the Sabbath day; religious in ordinances; religious in particular forms, but not in their everyday life, you may be quite sure that their religion is mere superstition-nothing else. Some men are very particular in attending to what they call their religious duties. They make a distinction between religious duties and their duties to their fellow men. Now this is a fundamental mistake, for mark me! a man who does not live a religious life can not be religious on the Sabbath; if he is not religious in his business, he can not be religious at the communion, and he has no more business to be there than the devil has - not a bit more! If he is not religious in his daily business, he has no more right to be at the table of the Lord than those harlots have who spend their lives in abominations too horrible to be mentioned.

Now this is no new doctrine! This is no American heresy! It is God's naked truth! If you don't believe it, you have fled to a refuge of lies.

But let me say again: others have a mere religion of opinion, which is just the opposite of a religion of impulse. The religion of impulse implies that a man feels strongly, and he acts in accordance with his feelings. But right over against this is the religion of opinion, which is another refuge of lies. These men hold very strongly a set of opinions - right or wrong they hold on to them. These opinions do not mould their lives nevertheless; but they hold the doctrines, the opinions, and make a great deal of them; yet they don't obey the commands involved in them. They live very careless and worldly lives, but no matter how corrupt, they think themselves to be Christians. But their religion is a mere matter of opinion, a mere question of doctrines, a mere holding on to certain dogmas, that do not mould, and fashion, and influence the life: dogmas that lie in their minds, but have never come into sympathy with their hearts; and while this is the case with men, they are only trusting in a refuge of lies: they have no real religion. They make much of their orthodoxy. They can not bear to hear a word said that does not accord with their particular notions of orthodoxy. They come to meeting, and they hear a sermon, and when it chimes in with their views, they say it is sound doctrine. Now the question is, do these doctrines affect their hearts? If so, it is well; but if it is otherwise, then sound doctrine is only leading them the shortest road to hell. Their orthodoxy is the most direct road to hell, because they are living in the full blaze of light. They will speculate about doctrines, but they make no efforts to pull sinners out of the fire, and to build up the kingdom of Christ. They are selfish, and close fisted; you would think that they were holding their worldly possessions with a death grasp. Now mark, they are very orthodox, and you can not offend them more than by touching their orthodox, but they are not living for God, and are not laying themselves out for the salvation of men - they live for themselves, and are maintainers of certain opinions; and if the doctrines which are involved in them were taken to the heart and moulded to life, they would stand forth as beautiful specimens of Christianity. But I repeat, much of the religious opinion is only a refuge of lies.

But another refuge of lies is the religion of sectarianism. I have seen much of this, and might tell of much. We see this largely in the Romish church, for she tells everybody not within her communion that they will go to hell; but it is not confined to that church; it is the doctrine of every church, who says that in their church only is salvation to be obtained. One particular sect sets itself up and claims to have apostolic succession, and everybody who is not of it is out of the church - that church is right, and every other church is wrong. When these sectarians, to whatever party they belong, speak of "the church," they do not mean the congregation of believers in every community, but their particular system or form which they call "the church." In this country, I believe that most of those who claim to themselves the right of being called the church, do admit that Dissenters from them may be Christians; and Dissenters will not deny that there may be good people in the church which is established by law in this land. But mark! there is a vast deal of zeal that is mere sectarianism. Really, I have been astonished sometimes in this country to hear ministers "*thank God for Methodism.*" I do not know how many times I have heard that! The first meeting that I attended in England was a missionary meeting, especially connected with the Wesleyan body, and I was astonished and appalled at the first that so much was said about the glory of Methodism; thanking God for Methodism, and so on. I had not been in the

habit of hearing such things in a missionary meeting, and it struck me as very astonishing that they should have invited people of different communities to be present, and talk thus while they knew that the very man who occupied the chair was not a Methodist! They had got together a multitude of people not belonging to their section of the church, in order to take up a collection for the missionary cause, and yet there was so much glorifying of Methodism! I did not rebuke it at the time, but I felt it, and I have since made up my mind, that if I ever hear it again under such circumstance, or any other, I will rebuke it! I will rebuke either the glorifying of Methodism, or the putting forward of any other species of sectarianism whatever, when Christianity ought to have been the theme. It is not to be tolerated. It is no part of religion. For my life I can not enter with zeal into any efforts to build up any particular sect. I have my own notions, but I know that others hold opinions different from mine, with as much honesty as I hold mine. I do not mean therefore that I have no particular opinions, but I will not glorify any particular denomination, and spend my life in building up a party. There is a vast deal too much of this party spirit, and what is the effect? Selfishness of heart, and no openness of soul - no going out for the salvation of the world. I do not mean to say that I do not regard any of the distinctions which prevail as of any importance, because I do; but I do not regard them of such importance as to merge everything in their favour. I can respect the gospel and myself too, and therefore I can not devote my time to the building up of a sect. *The salvation of men is the great question! The salvation of men's souls is the first concern!* Do not lay too much stress upon sectarian differences. Make your great aim the good of souls and the glory of God!

But let me say once more: another refuge of lies is having regard to what is outward, the performance of certain external actions without love to God in the heart. Religion is often, with many people, only a mere outward act; there is no spiritual life in the heart. This is ungodliness, in the true sense of the word which means unlikeness to God!

There are a vast many men who think themselves very religious because they pay their debts. They make a great deal of that. If you question them about their lives, they have everything on which to pride themselves. But is honesty Christianity? There are many infidels who are amiable in their daily life, and are honest towards their fellow men, and are what are called good neighbours, good husbands, good wives - persons who in their intercourse with men, may be depended on in worldly matters; men whose opinions are sound on worldly questions, men who are trustworthy in business; and they are all this upon a worldly principle, and for a worldly motive. Now let me say that these things are all needful in a certain sense; but I say also that in all this there is no virtue; there is not a particle of piety in it, as there is no recollection and recognition of the claims of God, no living to God, for if there were, it would express itself in prayer and praise, and in all those forms of sympathy with God, which piety always puts on. There must be supreme love to God wherever this is true piety. And mark! There will always be true love to man wherever there is real love to God.

Let not men deceive themselves, and suppose that because they are moral, they have done all that is required of them! Suppose a man is exempted from punishment, is he fitted for heaven? Has he come into sympathy with God? Is he prepared to enjoy God? could he dwell happily with the righteous in heaven? What sort of place could heaven

be if you could enjoy it? You have not come into sympathy with Christ; you reject Christ; you reject the Sabbath; you reject the Holy Ghost; and can you think that a supposed morality will answer your turn? Let me warn you to flee away from such a refuge of lies as that!

Let me say before I sit down to those who profess to be religious, who profess to be born of God. Is your religion a thing which can be known? Do your neighbours know it? Does your family know it? or are you hiding somewhere? behind some refuge of lies? Have you got behind that deacon? for you may make a refuge of lies of him! Have you got behind your minister? for you may make a refuge of lies of him! Don't hide yourselves anywhere! Be satisfied with nothing but Christ. Don't get behind that woman! Put no false standard before you. Set no standard but Christ before you! Be satisfied with no opinions that don't mould your life. Be satisfied with no religion that is not the life of your souls. Flee away from every source of error, every refuge of lies, and trust only in that which will mould your character, sanctify your life, and make you blessed forever. I beg of you to think upon these things.

10. THE SPIRIT CEASING TO STRIVE

“And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man.” - Genesis 6:3

The following is the train of thought which I design to pursue:

- I. What is implied in the assertion of the text!
- II. What is intended by the Spirit’s “Striving” with man!
- III. How may we know when he is striving with us!
- IV. What is meant by “shall not always strive!”
 1. Why will he “not always strive!”
 2. The consequences of his ceasing to strive.

These two things are implied in the assertion of our text; first, that God’s Spirit strives with man at least sometimes, and consequently that men do resist him always when there is strife; whenever the Spirit is obliged to strive with a man in order to influence him, why then, of course, resistance is implied. It should always be understood that whenever the Spirit can really be said to “strive” with an individual, that individual must be resisting. But what is intended by his striving? This striving, then, I would observe, is not a physical striving, but a moral influence, persuading, reasoning and convincing. This is the striving; it is a striving of mind with mind, and not of body with body. The process spoken of in the text is the presentation of truth on one side, and the resistance of it on the other. But if this is so, how do we know when the Spirit strives with us?

First, then, let me say, we can not know this by a direct perception of his agency. The mind does not see the Holy Spirit himself, but it perceives the truth which the spirit presents; for, observe the “striving” referred to is the pressing of considerations upon the mind to influence it, and the “resistance” spoken of is the resistance to the reception of these truths. In inquiring into the evidences of the Spirit striving with man, we must see what are these particular truths which are thus presented to the mind, and which call forth this “resistance? “ We are informed in the Bible what it is that the Spirit of God does _ he reproves of sin, for example. Christ promised he should do this, and that he should “take of the things of Christ and show them” to mankind. One of the signs by which men are made conscious that the Spirit is working within them is, the arresting of their attention to the subject of religious truth - they find these things fermenting in their minds and pressing upon them. Perhaps when they read or attend to business, do what they will the subject is always coming up. If they reasoned on the subject, they could come to no other conclusion than that there was some invisible agency at work within them which kept the matter incessantly before them; it seems to occupy their minds more than ever it did before. They feel an internal conviction of its light, its power, and its reality in a manner of which they had hitherto no conception. This is the striving of the Spirit.

Again, conviction of the sinfulness of one's conduct is another sign of the operations of the Spirit within. When men feel the sinfulness of their course of life, that is the striving of the Spirit. Men often go on in sin without reflecting on the sinfulness of what they are doing; but, by and by, the wickedness of their ways seems to have gained their attention. Looking back on their general conduct, and especially on particular acts, they see their sinfulness; things now come frequently up in their minds and trouble them which had passed unthought of, it may be for years, and when remembered, were not regarded by them as sins. But now they appear to regard them from a different point, and see their error. In some cases there will be a general sense of their sinfulness, of their whole lives - in others, particular acts will stand out and display themselves in a new and sinful light. This is an evident sign of the striving of the Spirit. When persons are striven with by the Spirit, they are not always greatly alarmed at the realisation of their dangerous position, though this is sometimes the case. Sometimes the Spirit does not strive with men because they think so little of their danger, so that they eventually come to fear the results of the Spirit's not striving more with them. The Spirit often gives such persons a distinct and awful glimpse of the exposure of their position.

Again; there are certain forms of sin to which some men are apt to be exceedingly blind; and when these persons are striven with by the Spirit, they come suddenly to a clear perception of this blindness under which they have been labouring. Without this striving these men are very apt to become self-righteous; and when they do feel intensely they are apt to resist and hold out against the Spirit, while all the time they give themselves credit for the possession of these tender feelings. Now it often happens that the Spirit drives off all this by allowing them to become so alarmingly hardened as to find that even these tender feelings on which they were wont to pride themselves have disappeared. Up to the very hour of their surrendering to God this hardness sometimes increases, till they begin to perceive that they never had so little feeling on the subject of religion; their hearts are as hard as adamant. The Spirit often shows these men that they have been mistaking the mere excitement of their feelings for tenderness of heart. Sometimes he convicts them of their unbelief, and shows them that they did not in reality place reliance on God - that they actually placed more reliance on what man said than on what God said. Men are influenced by each other's testimony, and if a man promises to another that he will do thus and thus, his friends believe and trust him and act accordingly. Now ask this man, Do you believe the Bible? Oh! yes, he believes the Bible. But is he influenced by what it promises, as much as he is by what men promise? No, indeed. Let a man come and warn you of your danger, would you not believe and act? If a man should promise you aid, would you not be relieved and comforted by it? If a man gave you a promissory note, as the donor was a man of property, would you not naturally expect to have it paid? But you do not believe God in these respects, yet you are apt to think that you do believe God; but the Spirit at length shows you that you are more comforted by men's promises than by God's - that God's promises in reality afford you very little satisfaction - in fact, that you are actually not at all influenced by what God says, as you are by what men say; when, therefore, you thus come to see the sin of this unbelief, you may rest assured that the Holy Spirit is striving with you.

Again: he convinces men of their *enmity* against God. Few men think themselves *enemies* of God and of religion, even if they do profess themselves to be Christians. It

is very common where persons have made a profession of religion, got into the church, and yet are not true Christians; I have observed that if they are not given up of God and become reprobates, if God intends to save them, God convinces them that, in reality, they are *enemies* of religion. Now you can all see the necessity of this. They profess to love religion, and how can they be saved unless they are convinced that they have made a radical mistake? The Spirit often commences by suffering this enmity to develop itself. They begin by complaining, perhaps, of the preaching; it is too severe, too personal, not “comforting” enough, or something of that kind; either the matter does not suit, or the manner is disagreeable; they want something that will make them happy - something “comforting.” They say they are Christians, and believe they speak the truth; they feel sure that if the preaching were what it ought to be, it would be sure to edify and “comfort” them. But God does not mean they should feel so, if he ever intends to save them. They are in a state of delusion, and anything that would make them happy, in this state, would only confirm their delusion; and consequently, God always so directs the preaching and everything as to make it set on them in such a manner as to show them clearly what has, by a great mistake, hitherto been covered up - the enmity of their hearts towards God.

Sometimes I have been struck by the extent to which this has been the case in revivals of religion. Some member of the church, to the astonishment of their ministers, begin to oppose the movement, finding fault with this thing and with that thing; they stay away from their services, go here and go there where they can be “comforted.” But the Spirit of God continues to strive with them, and keeps them uneasy, being determined to root out the enmity of their hearts. They come to meeting again and again, and go mumbling away with something more unpalatable than ever; they become each time less “comfortable.” Ah! they think “this is not the gospel, for it does not ‘comfort’ them.” How strange everything appears to them! Ah! this is the very way in which the Spirit works; he is determined to drag them out of their hiding places and unmask them. It is curious how long this oftentimes goes on till every one but themselves can see it. The very preaching that is moving the masses to inquire and leading numbers to God, all! they “are not edified with it at all.”

But do you not see there is a divine philosophy in all this? Oh! yes. These persons are sometimes very numerous in a church; pastors are often astonished to see so many of their members cavil and object. They object all the more, by how much the more powerful it comes home to them. By and by the pastor and deacons look on in amazement to see their members running hither and thither in such confusion. “What’s the matter? What’s the matter?” why the truth does not sit well on that unbroken heart! They writhe and writhe, finding this fault and that fault, till by and by, they see they do not really love the preaching that God loves - that they are, in fact, at enmity with God. Ah! I have seen them turn pale at such times; but by and by the fact comes out. “Oh! I thought I was a Christian! I have been so many years a member of the church, and yet I find that I stand before God condemned! I see that God and I are at issue - that God loves what I hate, and blesses what I oppose!” Ah! Now this is exactly the way the Spirit of God would take with such persons.

I have often heard, when preaching at various places, “Why, there’s such and such a professor saving so and so.” But by and by, you will see evidently that the truth is coming home, and hitting him hard. Why, see! he’s all in a “*squerm*” again. Pray for

him! What's the matter with him? What has been said - any untruth? "Oh, no, but he seems to think you are so personal." Ah! does he. Pray for him! God has got hold of him. He thinks that the minister and all the people are looking right at him; that he is speaking to him personally, and that all the congregation knows it. "Why," said a man to me one day, "it seemed as if not only did you look at me, and mean me, but that everybody knew it and looked at me." Now this is just what God does; and if you see a man begin to "*squerm*," pray for him. Do not be frightened. "Ah!" says a woman, "why, how my husband is offended! He thinks you are personal." Oh, does he; well, pray for him! Do not you see that he is clearly striving against the reception of the truths? "Why?" "Because," says he, "it means me." Does it? Then do not you resist it? Oh! I like to get upon the track of such persons, and hunt them out. I like to follow them and hunt them up, and search them out, till they are broken down. This is the way the Holy Spirit does; he is very personal, and makes the truth personal. He directs the mind of the preacher in such a manner as to make it stick close to an individual he wishes to move; thus it is that people get the impression that the preacher knows them and their history, and think somebody must have been telling him about them. During my thirty years experience, persons have often told me this, whereas it was nothing else than the Almighty directing my thoughts in a certain channel, in order to meet their case. God knew them, although I did not. My bow was drawn at a venture, but God directed the arrow, and it found its way through the joints of their harness; and they were "not comforted." "Not comforted!" Why, the gospel was never made to comfort you in your unsanctified state.

This is also very often the case with merely moral men, who help by their means to support religious institutions; such men are very apt to overlook the fact that they are enemies to God; and therefore, God must in some way show it to them. How is he to do it? They are almost Christians in their own opinion. Their religious wives say - "Oh! I have great hope of him." How often has this been the case. But God sees their real state. They do not come out and acknowledge Christ publicly. God knows there is a rotten heart there. They are amiable, and their exterior is lovely; God must make them know themselves by a course of teaching, preaching, providences, or some other method, and thus take off the veil from their hearts. This being done, they begin to writhe and act in the way the professors just spoken of are accustomed to act. "They are not going there to be preached *at* in that way, when they are doing so much to aid religion. To be treated in such a manner they think is very personal and abusive." It is very hard, they can not bear it, although they do not, and can not deny its truth. By and by you will see them writhe. This shows that there is a sediment at the bottom of their hearts; stir it up. Do not be afraid. Pray for them. If you find your unchristian husband begin to *squerm*, and threaten not to go to meeting, *do not ride with him*, and say you think he has reason to be offended. If you do not want to ruin his soul, do not take his part. "Oh! " say to him, "Is it true? then you ought to receive it. Is it true of you? you are bound to receive it; for if it means you, and you do not receive it, what will become of you? What! you confess it is true, and true of you, and yet refuse to receive it!" Be careful what you do under such circumstances; for wherever persons thus quarrel with truth, they are, in reality, quarrelling with God. Mark that. But these people often pretend that it is not the truth they quarrel with, but the offensive manner in which it is said. Now mark. Take care what you do. *A real lover of truth is willing to receive it, though it is not on a golden dish.*

And the way in which God convinces the sinner of the danger of his dying in sin, is, by impressing him with the fact that he has not long to live. He feels that others around are dying in their sins, that he himself has lived a long time in his sin, and he begins to calculate on probabilities, and to apply it to himself. This often is used as a means of inducing decision, or at least, of greatly deepening previous impressions. And the mode in which the Spirit operates is to warn men of the danger of his leaving them. At other times he shows them that they are actually ashamed of Christ - ashamed to have it known that they think of being religious - ashamed to talk even to their wives, or open their mind to their minister - ashamed to be seen reading the Bible, or to have it known that their minds are exercised on the subject. Persons in this state are afraid of being supposed to be serious, and therefore often laugh and try to conceal it, while at heart they are full of soreness and distress. But this shows them more and more that they are ashamed of Christ; and they begin to perceive their pride of heart and the awful wickedness of the position they occupy in relation to God.

Sometimes the Spirit operates by leaving men wholly without excuse. Every plea they have been accustomed to urge is swept from under them. They have none left to hide behind as they were wont to do. The Spirit follows them in their excuses, and strips them off one by one, till he has silenced them all; and they turn them over and over, one after the other, but can not find one to rest upon. The Spirit thus strove with me for months before I was aware of it; but at length I found as I fled from one excuse to another; but my mind would answer each as it rose. Thus the Spirit undermines all my fortifications, till I had not a single apology to make for my conduct. Now mark. Perhaps this very process is going on with some of you. How is it? If you feel that I am personal, see if the truth sits well upon you. If you find that any particular truth does not sit well upon you, whatever your character may be in a general way, rely upon it that you are at war at least with that one truth; and if at war with truth, you are at war with God.

Persons are sometimes convinced by seeing that they have been altogether selfish. Selfishness is sin; and all sin is selfishness in some form. Persons often see that their very religion has hitherto been selfishness; they can see clearly that they are not in sympathy with God and with Christ - that they have not the spirit of Christ within them - that they are not living to and for God - and that they are utterly selfish in their business, and even in the relations they sustain to what they call their religion. They are fully convinced of this. Ah! are you convinced of it? Do not resist the light on such questions! Oh! if you shut down the gate, turn your eyes away, and refuse to be convinced you will wake up in the blackness and darkness forever!

Before I leave this subject I ought to say that sinners often get the impression on their minds, that this is the last call God will ever give them. Doubtless the Spirit of God means what he says. In such cases it would be very natural for the Spirit in taking the last struggle with a man, to give him such an impression; it is no doubt common for him to do so. Professors of religion have often seen at such times great reason to doubt whether they were even truly converted, and this impression has been confirmed by a glimpse at their lives. By and bye, perhaps, the Spirit of God impresses them with the idea that if they now resist, they will die in their sins. Now, sinner, when God insinuates such things he is in earnest. The devil does not want you to believe any such things; he would not tell you so if he knew it. It comes from one who can not lie, and

who, in his benevolence, forewarns you that, if you now resist, you are a ruined soul to all eternity.

What is meant by the assertion that the Spirit will “not always strive?” Not, of course, that he will leave the earth; but that he will not always follow a man through the whole of his life, and continue to strive with him to the end of his days.

Why not? First, because it will not do them any good. If, after so many strivings, a man will not repent, why should the Spirit continue to follow him? They are enlightened as much as they need to be enlightened, yet they resist and resist - why then should he continue to strive with them? Again, he forbears to do so in compassion to them. When he has once thrust home these very truths which must convert them, if they ever are converted, he knows that, by a natural law of their minds, the longer they resist the more likely they are to continue resisting. Besides, it would materially enhance their guilt. There is, therefore, no way consistent with his honour in which he can follow them any longer. Again; their guilt is so aggravated under such circumstances - from their striving with God face to face, and resisting - sinning with full light and tempting God's forbearance - these considerations present another reason. They hope God will save them in their sins at some future time, but it would be inconsistent with God's honour to do so. There is a point beyond which it is inconsistent with God's high and adorable sovereignty, that men should continue to resist and quarrel with him face to face. Again, if this were not so, men would take courage and continue in their sins, with the idea that they would be just as likely to have the Spirit strive with them when old as when young; and therefore, to avoid this inference, God's Spirit will not always strive with man. Once more. God needs young persons to be converted, that he may train them up to do good: but if they go on till they have well nigh burnt out the lamp of life, God will, indeed, have compassion on them, if they repent; but how seldom do they repent, under such circumstances! They have wasted their life and can do no good if they are converted; and, having served the devil so long, shall they take the stinking snuff of their expiring lamp - the jaded, putrid remnant of mortality which has resisted the Holy Ghost till the grave is open before them - and cast it, as it were, in the face of the Almighty? But again: it would be bad policy on the part of God's government to convert old people as easily as young ones; it would tend to harden the young in their sins: the general rule, therefore, must be the conversion of the young, while the conversions of the old will be at distances just sufficient in number to keep the aged sinner from utterly despairing.

But we must now proceed to inquire what are the *consequences of the Spirit ceasing?*

The first consequence, naturally, is confirmed apathy - carelessness and prayerlessness in sin. This the general rule. Another consequence is, continued opposition; after the Spirit of God has convinced persons - when they have related strong convictions - when their consciences have smarted under the force of truth - they hate it. Their very consciences become unfeeling. They can commit sins now without compunction, which once would have filled them with agony - they go on in sin with very little remorse. This, too, is a general rule, as I might show; but in some instances there is the reverse - a fearful looking for of judgment. They often, however, wax worse and worse, until if they do not go out into open apostasy, it is only the fear of their reputation that prevents them. Christians will find themselves losing the spirit of prayer for them. The

wife will lose the power to pray for her husband under such circumstances; she loses her hold on the throne of grace for him; and it is the same in the husband towards the wife, the parent towards the child, and the child towards the parent. The Spirit will not lead a man to pray for those who have grieved him away. No means that are used will savingly affect them; they will become more and more opposed to the means, till they finally abandon the use of them, and the evil habits they formerly indulged in, come back strongly upon them.

A few remarks must conclude what I have to say, and the first remark is this: Have you been thus striven with? Did the spirit of cavilling resistance come upon you? Have you felt, at some time, that the minister meant you? Perhaps you have said, "Now, if that minister had known my history, he could not have told it better." Have you been in this state? Have you felt offended at his being so "personal?" I have often thought that there are multitudes of professors of religion who have thoroughly quenched the Spirit; and the reason I think so is this: they are in the church, and hold themselves up in hope, while everybody who knows them, sees that the Spirit of Christ is not within them; if they are searched they feel displeased; there is a want of honesty in their hearts a want of that downright sincerity in religion - there is a slipperiness, carnal policy, quibbling dishonesty, a putting on of religion - still there is something which serves to bolster them up. They are particular to keep themselves in countenance by regular attendance at the administration of the ordinance, lest the minister or deacons should get at the fact of their being in a state of apostasy from God. But try to get them to do anything else, and you can not secure their co-operation, unless it is where their character is concerned. Ah! they say, here is such a one's name on the book, has he had a communion ticket? How is this? Ah! they have attended to that, and thus they have covered up the rottenness of their heart and their carnal worldly life by going to the communion!

Oh! I do not know if there are any such persons here tonight, but as my mind is strongly pressed in this direction, I fear there are; and if God is now showing you that you ought to be honest with yourselves, do not go on with your deceitful game! I do not know you - but God knows you; I only beg of you not to ruin your soul by cheating yourself on a point so vital. Many professors get into that state that they hear unmoved the truths which smite the hearts of infidels and break them in pieces as a potter's vessel. They sit unmoved, or if moved at all, it is only to opposition. They have no sympathy with the work of God - no care about anybody being converted, even perhaps their own children. I have known churches where some of the members were the most hardened reprobate persons I ever knew in all my life - the most disposed to cavil, and the least disposed to co-operate. You deacons know whether such persons are here tonight; when you meet the man you are now thinking about, do you find him disposed to cavil, or is his heart in the work? You know whose hearts are in the work, and who, you have reason to believe, are hardened in their sins. The fact is on such subjects as this, it is the most awful cruelty not to deal faithfully with such men. I would sooner cut off both my hands than play a silly game with a man about his soul, his sins, and eternity! I have often been astonished to find that while professors cavil, ungodly men have said, "Ah! that's just what we need, let it come! Let us know the truth, and the worst of our case. Let it come burning and boiling till it melts the icebergs of our hearts!"

One word more. When the Spirit strives, men are in great danger of putting off submission day after day till at length the Spirit leaves them. They try to think about religion but do not come to the point. Ah! They do not know the infinite danger they are in of being left amidst all this palavering. Ah! "While thy servant was busy here and there, behold the Spirit was gone." They must wait till they have done this thing or that thing, and thus they go on; day after day the Spirit strives with them till at length he takes his flight. You should reflect that every moment you are resisting, you are in infinite danger of his leaving you. "My Spirit shall not always strive."

Again: when the Spirit strives it is the most solemn point of the sinner's existence. The judgment-day will disclose things which are done in time, but the sinner's destiny is settled here. When the Spirit strives with men he settles with them personally. The work is done up one way or the other, and becomes a matter of record. The leaf is folded and laid aside till the day of judgment; but here is the time and place in which the thing is done - this is the world on which hangs suspended the eternal life or death of immortal souls. But not only is the matter finally settled in this world, but there must be some turning point at which the settlement takes place. What an hour is that! Christian! Do you realise that when the Spirit is striving with your children, they are then at a moment more important to them than any other moment of their whole existence. Are you asleep over it? Do you see them honest on religious subjects, or do they creep to the house of God hardly willing to let you know it? Do you see already indications that the Spirit of God has been with them? Are you not looking after this? If you see this interest in their countenances - oh! what are you doing? Are you watching unto prayer? Do you feel how great their danger is? Do you feel that their crisis is infinitely more solemn than a fever would be, provided they were Christians? The eternal destinies may hang on that moment, and what are you doing? God is solemn and in earnest, angels are solemn and in earnest, devils are solemn and in earnest, the Holy Spirit is solemn and in earnest - *and do you trifle?* Who are you that you should trifle? Why the very one that heaven and hell are earnest about! Oh! sinner what are you doing? Professor of religion what are you doing? Who can come with his hand upon his breast and say, "Oh, Lord Jesus thou knowest that I love thee, that in my life I acknowledge thee, and that I do this in remembrance of thee, and will show forth thy death till thou comest?" Are you prepared to come and partake of these elements, and prepared to come in such a sense that those who know you feel that you are such a person that you have a right to come? Or do they say of you, What Mr. - -! why I should never have thought that he was a member! What! does he come to the Communion? Is that woman a professor? Why, I have seen them in such places, and under such circumstances that I should never have thought it!

11. A PUBLIC PROFESSION OF CHRIST

All persons are or ought to be interested in the following points.

I. What is implied in making a public profession of religion?

II. What are the reasons for making such a profession?

III. What are the reasons assigned by those who neglect to make such a profession, as a justification of their conduct?

IV. What is implied in not making a public profession of religion?

All persons are really interested in the discussion of these questions, whether they feel so or not. Every one has really a deep interest in understanding these particular points. I shall not take any text tonight, and shall be compelled from want of time to be as brief as may be; and, therefore, must not enlarge upon these points. The field suggested by them is a vast one, and each of these heads might well occupy a full discourse. We have then, to inquire briefly,

I. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN MAKING A PUBLIC PROFESSION OF RELIGION?

First: it is a public avowal of hearty confidence in the facts revealed in the gospel, and in Jesus Christ, together with all things that are recorded of him in the Bible; this is implied in making a public profession of religion- it is a public avowal of faith in Jesus, and a sincere and hearty belief of the facts and principles of the gospel.

Again: it is a public surrender to Christ, or submission to him. It is a public avowal of submission and consecration to him in the relations he sustains to men. It is, I say, a public act of submission, and a surrendering of everything up to him as the only Saviour of the world. Again: it is a public avowal of sympathy with him in the great work in which he is engaged, that of bringing about the salvation of men. Again, it implies a public renunciation of self and the spirit of self-seeking. A public profession of self-denial, in this sense, that we no longer live for ourselves; it is a profession therefore of universal devotion to God. But again: it also implies dependence on him in all the relations in which he is exhibited. Further: it implies a confession of sin that we can not be saved by our own righteousness, not even begin to be saved. It is a public profession of the impossibility of being saved on the ground of law, and therefore a public declaration of the fact that Christ is the only possible way in which a man can be saved. All profession then is designed to be a public avowal of confidence in the truths of the gospel, of submission to Christ, and of dependence on his authority. Again: it is a public renunciation of the spirit of the world!

for a man can not be in love with the world and with Christ too. It is an oath of allegiance to Christ. It is a public vouching that he is your God and Saviour. But once more, it is to profess to be representatives of Christ. By the very act of making a public profession of religion you profess that you have received the Spirit of Christ, and therefore, that you intend to exhibit it to the world. By professing religion you virtually say to the world, we will give you an illustration in our lives, temper, spirit, and

actions, of what Christianity is. Nothing less than this is implied in making a public profession of the Christian religion. There are many other things that I might mention, which are implied in a public profession, but I have not time. We shall therefore proceed to notice -

II. SOME OF THE REASONS WHY PERSONS SHOULD MAKE SUCH PROFESSION

First: surely it is no more than simple honesty. The fact is, not to do so is to be guilty of the utmost wrong to God and Christ, to your own soul and to the world at large. The facts of the gospel being admitted - and they can not with any show of reason be denied- to acknowledge them is but a simple act of honesty. Men are not their own, they are bought with a price, and therefore it is but honest that they should publicly acknowledge this. In short, everyone can see that the facts about Christ, his nature, his relations, his atonement, makes it a simple matter of honesty, that every man to whom the gospel is preached, should at once acknowledge that these things are so, and avow his confidence in them, his sympathy with them, his dependence on them, and his submission to them. It is easy to see that this is a mere act of simple honesty, and that no individual has a right to call himself an honest man who does not openly, publicly acknowledge these facts that are as true as heaven itself is true! But again: a public profession of Christianity is essential to self-respect. No person who understands the Christian religion, and does not publicly profess it, can respect himself -he has not, and can not have any solid self-respect; he is, and must be ashamed of himself. Indeed, a gentleman of this city told me this fact of himself only today; that before he became a professor of religion, the minister, whose preaching he attended, used to deliver an annual sermon, in which he brought out the facts in relation to attendance at the communion table of the members of his congregation; so many had celebrated the ordinance once, so many twice, or so and so many times, and a great many not at all. When these facts were brought out, said the gentlemen, I said, why, our minister takes notice of those persons who absent themselves from the communion table, and I became so ashamed of myself, as frequently to stay away altogether. I felt thoroughly ashamed of myself, that I could go to a Christian church, hear the word of God, mingle with the congregation, and with God's people, and yet after all never publicly avow my attachment to Christ, never avow my belief in the table, and in the gospel. Now from the nature of the case, a moral agent does not, and can not sincerely respect himself if he knows himself to be dishonest; that he sustains such infinitely important relations to God, and yet refuses to acknowledge them; such a man, I say, can not respect himself; he has no solid self-respect whatever. He knows that he is dishonest to God, ungrateful to the Saviour, and foolish to himself. I say, therefore, that all persons to whom the gospel is preached ought to understand this, that a public profession of the gospel is essential to true self-respect. And further: it is also essential to true peace of mind, because if a man does not make this public profession of what he knows to be the truth, he does not comply with the fundamental law of his own conscience, and his own being.

But once more: such a profession is, in every point of view, due to Christ. Every man who knows that Christ tasted death for every man, is bound to acknowledge it. Christ will become the advocate of every man who will submit his cause to him, and he is therefore bound to acknowledge his obligations to him. A great many sinners seem to

forget that they receive their daily bread from heaven in consideration of what Christ has done for them. Everything they have in this world, every drop of water with which they cool their tongue, is granted because Christ has appeared on their behalf, and given himself to die for the world. God would no more give such blessings to the wicked as he actually does give them, than he would show such favours to the devils, if Christ had not undertaken the mediatorial work. Every man, then, simply regarding the fact that he is out of hell, whether saint or sinner, is bound to acknowledge his obligations to Christ, and that publicly, before all men.

There is a circumstance just come to my mind that will illustrate this. I think I related it before in this place, but no matter, I need not enter into particulars. A man who had lived many years, indeed all his life long, under the sound of the gospel, and who had made a profession of religion, but was not satisfied that he had ever given his heart to Christ, although he knew the truth, had a dream one night, in which it seemed to him that himself and his brother were journeying to a certain place, when a messenger from heaven met them, and said, as you travel along you will come to a place where the roads branch off, the one to the right, and the other to the left, and at that spot you must separate: you will be told which road you must each take and the one that takes the right will go to heaven, while he that takes the left must go to hell! Well, he thought they passed along, and he was in great agitation of mind, until they came to the roads of which the heavenly messenger had told him, when it was announced that he was to take the left hand. Filled with the greatest consternation, he turned about to pursue the path assigned him, and as he was about to part with his brother, he said to him, well, farewell brother, you are going to heaven, you have been a very good man, but I am going to hell! I shall not see you any more, but I want you to tell the Lord Jesus Christ that I am greatly obliged to him for all the favours I have received at his hands, for all the good he has done me, and for all the good he would have done had I been willing. I have no fault to find, and no excuses make, but as I shall never reach heaven to see the Lord Jesus, I want you to carry this message to him, that I am greatly obliged for all that he has done for me, and even for what he now appoints, I have nothing to accuse him of although I have failed of heaven, for it is my own fault! With this he burst out into loud weeping, and awoke, and then there stood before him, in a manner most clear and bright, his own real relations to Christ. The dream has seemed to prepare his mind and probably the Holy Spirit was concerned in it, for a full reception of the truth; and it so broke his heart all to pieces, that he immediately surrendered himself to Christ. Now, observe, he recognised the fact, although he was going to hell as he supposed, that he had received a great many favours from God on account of Christ, and that, therefore, he owed a deep debt of gratitude and obligation to him, and so told his brother to thank him for those favours which he had received at his hands. Now I suppose many of you have not even done so much as that! Did you ever send such a message to Christ, or tell him yourself that you thanked him for his favours?

But again: it is right and reasonable, on the face of it, that you should publicly acknowledge Christ, and thus show that you regard yourself as being under very great and lasting obligations to him.

Once more: it is due to yourselves that you should make this acknowledgment.

Again: it is due to those who are related to you, and over whom you may exert any influence. You can not live without exerting some influence, and therefore it is your duty to them who are likely to be influenced by you, that you should publicly profess Christ, and espouse his cause, and thus give them the full benefit of your example; their interests demand this, and you are under an obligation to give it. Think, if you are parents what an influence you have upon your children; and almost everything will depend upon the example that you set them.

Once more: you owe it to the church of God. The church have been praying for you, and to them doubtless, you are indebted for the blessings of life. If you read your Bible, you will find that the prayers of God's people being interposed, are continually assigned as the reasons and conditions upon which God spares sinners. It is the church that they owe the means of grace, and a great many of the blessings which they enjoy; they owe it to the church, therefore to make a public profession of religion.

Once more: you owe it to the world at large, because the world is infinitely interested in this matter, that you should not take the wrong side; and have, therefore, a right to claim the whole benefit of all that you might do to save the world if you did your duty. Once more: Christ expressly enjoins this upon all men. The gospel expressly commands that men should profess the name of Christ before the universe - this is one of the plainest commands in the whole Bible. Another reason why persons should publicly commit themselves to Christ is that it is useful to them: it is a foreclosing the heart against sin. Who does not see the importance of this? that the mind should as much as possible be closed against sin and temptation. A public profession is a guard upon the man who makes it. It forecloses the mind against those influences which might lead it away. The standing illustration of the Bible, of this principle, is the institution of marriage. There are a great many points of view in which it is of the greatest importance that parties who wish to live together, should commit themselves to each other by a public act. They would otherwise be much more exposed to temptation; and it is of great importance to the parties themselves. What a safeguard it is for the wife that she can stand forth as a married woman, against being addressed by other men, and the same with the husband. So it is with those who publicly commit themselves to Christ. It is a proclaiming to the world that it is no longer to expect their sympathy: they are now committed to Christ, and the door is closed against the world and sin.

But let me say again: the public profession of any individual presents an inducement for Christ to watch over him, and by his grace to secure his perseverance in a holy life. For example, when an individual thinks himself a Christian, and yet makes no public profession of Christ, what honour does he bring to Christ, and what inducement is there for Christ to watch over him? People see that he lives a consistent life, and as he makes no profession of Christ, all the credit of his conduct is ascribed to nature, and not to grace. The world will give all the credit to the man, and not to Christ, to whom it really belongs. Now what has Christ to do with such an individual as this? Here is an individual deeply indebted to Christ for everything good that he possesses, but he makes no public acknowledgment of it. Thus he does not honour Christ, why then should Christ continue to watch over him? Why should such a man's candle continue lighted, as it is always kept under a bushel? I say then, that when a man makes a public profession of Christ, and thus acknowledges his dependence on him, he presents an inducement for Christ to continue to give him grace. The Psalmist frequently mentions

the fact that he had not kept his righteousness within his own heart, and concealed it from the great congregation. And there is something reasonable as well as scriptural in this. When a man fully commits himself to Christ he engages and ensures the protection of an Almighty arm; he throws himself upon the grace of Christ. Look at Peter in the ship. When Christ was walking on the water, he said, If it be thou bid me come to thee on the water; and as soon as the Lord said Come, he did not hesitate, but just cast himself upon the protection of Christ. Did he let Peter sink? O no, Christ did not let him sink when he had fully committed himself. So when an individual, from right motives, publishes his attachment to Christ, he may depend upon being preserved: Christ will never forsake him. Let him do this with all humility, and what an argument would it put into his mouth. O Lord Jesus, did I not commit myself to serve thee, and illustrate thy religion before the world depending on thee for grace, and now shall the light that is in me become darkness, shall thy grace be withheld, so that I shall crucify thee afresh, and put thee to an open shame? No, indeed, this shall never be in such a case. Would not that be an argument likely to prevail with Christ? Yes; and ought to have power with him if made in good faith.

Once more: another reason why we should make a public profession of religion is, that we ought to be in the channel in which his covenant blessings flow to his people. If we would have these blessings we must comply with God's order. Again: making a public profession of religion gives those who do it an especial interest in the sympathies and cares of the whole church militant. It is not true that people who belong to different denominations make up so many different churches. The fact is, they are all branches of the church of God if they are real Christians: they may differ in certain forms, and minor things, but they are in heart essentially one. Every genuine disciple of Christ then, who avows his attachment, sustains an intimate relation to the entire church militant, and the church triumphant too, for they are both one. The head of the church is in heaven, and there also are the advanced members; while those who yet remain below entirely sympathise with those who are made perfect in heaven. Every visible member of Christ, then, brings himself by the public profession, under the watchful cares, the sympathy and prayers of the entire church of God. And is this a small thing? Understand, I am not speaking of mere hangers on to the church, and there has always been plenty of these in every age, but I speak of the true church in whatever denomination it is found.

Once more: another reason for making a public profession is, that when individuals come out and are entirely honest with themselves and with God, they then can respect themselves, for they have peace with God; they then have fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and they are not the individuals to shrink away from public responsibility. But I can not dwell any longer on this part of the subject. We have now to consider in a few words -

III. SOME OF THE REASONS THAT ARE ASSIGNED, PUBLICLY OR SECRETLY, FOR THE NEGLECT OF THIS DUTY

One says, I am not a Christian. Well, and is that a good excuse for not doing your duty? It is only to assign one sin as an excuse for another. Why are you not a Christian? Suppose a man should attempt to justify himself for having committed some horrible crime by pleading the fact that he was very wicked and loved sin. That,

certainly, would not be regarded as a good excuse! No! no! It will not do to plead that you are not a Christian, expecting that such a plea will excuse you, for it only aggravates your guilt.

Another says, I do not make a profession because I fear I should disgrace Christ and his cause. Indeed! Is that a good reason? Is it a true reason? I fear there must be some mistake in that. Do you so dread to dishonour Christ's name and cause, that you abstain on that account from making a public profession, lest by it you should dishonour him? Do you say that? Yes? Well, but is it no dishonour for you to deny him? Do you love him so much and fear to dishonour him and his cause, that you abstain from making a profession lest you should dishonour him? Indeed! How is it then that you are not afraid to sin by denying Christ, which you do by refusing to acknowledge him?

Ah, says another, I am afraid of such a responsibility. Indeed! And is there no responsibility in the other direction? You fear the responsibility of professing Christ! Well, do you not fear the heavier responsibility of denying him? Is there no responsibility in taking part with his enemies, and refusing to obey his commands? Yes, indeed, there is a solemn, awful responsibility.

Another says, It is such a solemn thing. Yes, indeed, it is; but is it not also a solemn thing not to make a public profession? It is a solemn thing, you say, if what I have said is actually implied in making a profession. Is it not a solemn thing? Yes, it is; but it is still more solemn to refuse to do it when Christ requires it, and reason, conscience, and the entire universe ask it at your hands.

Another reason assigned oftentimes is, I can as well be saved without it. What does this mean? As well be saved without it! Is it then a mere question of loss and gain with you? Is the great end in view simply to be saved, no matter how? Do you care nothing about sympathy with Christ? nothing about obeying his commands! so that you gain salvation at last; is that all you care about? But what can you mean by that, Can be as well saved without it. Can you be saved by disobeying Christ as well as by obeying him? You refused to acknowledge him, and yet expect to be saved by him? What does Christ himself say to you He that is ashamed of me before men, of him will I be ashamed before my Father and the holy angels. Now I suppose it is true that where individuals have no opportunity to avow and acknowledge Christ before men they may be saved without; but if men neglect to perform their duty where opportunities offer to comply with it, they will not be held excused. To say that persons can be saved without publicly acknowledging Christ when they have every opportunity to do it, is equivalent to saying that they can just as well be saved in sin as by breaking off from it. What is sin but a neglect of duty. Can a man live and die in sin and yet be a Christian? O, but say some, this is only one sin. Well, suppose it is, if you live in it deliberately you live in sin, for if you indulge in any form of iniquity you do not renounce one sin from your heart. Now, can you recognise God's authority in anything if you do not in everything? What does the Bible say? If a man offend in one point he is guilty of all. There is a great mistake I believe on this subject. A great many people suppose that they can neglect this duty, while they acknowledge it to be so, and yet get to heaven as well as if they complied with it. You who think so are entirely mistaken, for you live in known

sin if you neglect acknowledged duty; and how can you be saved if you live in sin? It is impossible!

Once more: a public profession of religion is the way to have the evidence of acceptance with God. How can you expect to realise the promises without a public committal of yourself to Christ? It is faith that inherits the promises and not unbelief. The fact is that many persons are waiting for evidences that they are accepted of God, while they are unwilling to obey him. Further: a great many persons who have had a clear hope in Christ have put off making a public profession until they have grieved the spirit and brought darkness over their own mind. The path was once clear, but they neglected it, and now, mark! they will in all probability die in that darkness, or be obliged to make a public profession of religion before God will restore to them the light which they seek. I have known a great many cases of persons waiting for light, but have not obtained it till they have made up their minds to obey God; and when they have done this then light has come.

But once more: another reason assigned is, I do not like publicly to commit myself. Now that excuse, right on the face of it, is an evidence that your heart is not right; for if your heart was right you would not hesitate for an instant to commit yourself before the world. Nay! You would be anxious, as publicly as possible to attach yourself to Christ. Another reason, which is sometimes assigned by individuals is, that it will subject them to be scrutinised. People will watch me to see how I live. Ah! and do you shrink away from that? If I do not make a public profession, so much will not be expected of me. Indeed! And is that a good reason why you should not make a public profession? What ought to be expected of you? But another says, It will subject me to persecution. Indeed! And is that a good reason for not making a public profession? Did Christ shrink back from coming to rescue you because it would subject him to persecution? Was he never persecuted for you, and can not you afford to bear any persecution for him? Surely it is enough that the servant be as his Lord, and the disciple as his Master! If Christ had held back from your salvation on account of persecution, where would you have been? But he did not withhold his cheek from the smiters, and from those that plucked off the hair; he was maligned, slandered, and murdered for your sake. How then does it become you to talk in that way?

Again: some people, I am ashamed to say, do not make a public profession of religion, because if they did they would be expected to support the institutions of the gospel. And is that a good reason why you should not espouse the cause of Christ, because that by doing so you would be expected to do your part in this great work? O shame, that anybody ever should have such a thought! Whose are you? and to whom belong all your possessions? Can not you afford to be a professor of religion? Afford it!! And could Christ afford to die for you? Suppose he had said, when he found what your salvation would cost him, I can not afford it! Where would you and I have been tonight if Christ had said he could not afford to save us?

Another says, It will subject me to greater restraint than I like. I shall not be able to go to such and such places. I sometimes like to visit the theatre, but that is no place for professors of religion. Now I can occasionally gratify myself in this way; but if I made such a public profession, such a course would injure the cause of Christ. Then you mean to indulge yourself, and you do not like the restraints that Christ would impose

upon you. Well, and do you expect to secure heaven and indulge in your sinful gratifications too? You want gratifications that are inconsistent with the Christian character, and yet you hope to be saved. Friends! do not deceive yourselves, I beg of you!

Once more: I fear I shall be sorry if I do. What will make you sorry? Do you think that if you make a public profession, and then live as you ought to live, that you will be sorry? Some people I fear mean by this excuse to say, I shall wish to be out of the church of God because I shall not like to live such a life as will be demanded of me. Now if you feel thus, it is a plain proof that you have not committed your soul to Christ.

But another says, I do not know what church to join, there are so many denominations and churches. Can not you make up your mind? Consult Christ, then, and see if you can not get some light. Is there nowhere that you can have Christian sympathy and fellowship? O yes, you can find a place! There are those who have prayed for you, and earnestly besought the Lord to distil upon you the dews of his heavenly grace, and if you seek, you will find them.

Once more: It is a dreadful thing to make a false profession, say some. So it is; but is it not a dreadful thing to make no profession at all? Oh, but I can live a Christian life without it! Well, suppose you did! I have already intimated that this would be really to deny Christ, and refuse him his proper due. Man gets the praise himself for his consistent walk, although it is the effect of the water of grace which Christ has distilled upon his heart. This is giving all to nature, and robbing Christ. When the communion table is spread, he keeps away; and what does this say to the world? Why, virtually this, See how I keep myself; you see I have no need of Christ: you see how good I am, but I owe nothing to the grace of Christ! But it is false! it is false! You can not be a Christian and make no profession of Christ! But I am to notice very briefly

IV. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN NOT MAKING A PUBLIC PROFESSION OF RELIGION

First, it is a public denial and rejection of Christ; and it is also a denial of him of the most emphatic kind it is a denial of the LIFE: it is a denial of dependence on him or obligation to him, and a most emphatic denial, not in words but in DEEDS! Again: it is a profession that you have no part nor lot in religion. Again: it is a denial of the truth in relation to Christ. Again: it is a public acknowledgment of unbelief, or infidelity, which is unbelief. Once more: it is a public proclamation that in your view, the Christian religion is a delusion, and Christ is an imposter! Perhaps you do not say this nor really intend it: perhaps you never thought that this was implied in not making a public profession, but it is true nevertheless. Again: not to make a profession of Christ is a public avowal of sympathy on the other side. Now I know that many persons are not aware of the things that are involved in standing aloof from a profession of Christ, and it is for this reason that I state these things, that they who hear me may no longer be in ignorance.

Once more: it is a public profession of impenitence as well as unbelief. Observe, everybody makes some public profession. You are not to suppose that because you do not make a public profession in favour of religion that therefore you make no

profession about it, for you do. Your refusing to profess Christ is a public declaration against him. His friends are on one side, and his enemies on the other, and you must belong to one party or the other: and if you are not committed to him you voluntarily subject yourselves to the doom of the enemies of Christ.

I must close with just one or two remarks. Professors of religion should watch over each other with paternal love; watch over them for good and not for evil. I am sorry to say that I have sometimes witnessed a spirit the very opposite of this. I have seen old professors watching for the halting of younger Christians. Oh! I trust it will not be so in this church! but that you will set yourselves to be brothers and sisters indeed; and that the fathers will sympathise with the youth!

Once more: young professors should always remember that they voluntarily place themselves in such a position as to draw the eyes of the world upon them, and of the church. They are the spectacle of angels and of men. Let them remember this!

But thirdly: let them not be deterred from witnessing for Christ on account of the great responsibility which it involves. Christ has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." therefore do not hesitate to put yourselves in the position that Christ requires. He will give you strength equal to your day.

Once more: identify yourselves with every Christian effort. Let all young Christians, who have now become assembled in the fellowship of the church, and others who will do so, doubtless, on the next admission, identify themselves fully with the people of God. Always manifest your sympathy with every good work, and everything which belongs to God's cause. You have publicly espoused it, let it possess your heart. Let all your actions witness that your profession is not an empty profession!

12. THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

“Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” - Acts 20:26-27

I preach from this text, as some of you are aware, at Dr. Campbell's particular request. Much as I have laboured as an Evangelist, and the many times I have been called to part with those amongst whom I have laboured, I have never allowed myself to preach from this text; and when the Doctor asked me to do so this evening, I told him that I did not feel as if I could; there are so many affecting things in it about the Apostle; and I am further loth to preach upon it, lest some should infer that I am in some sense comparing myself with the Apostle, than which nothing is further from my design or desire. In speaking from these words I shall notice - WHAT IS INTENDED BY THE ASSERTION THAT THE APOSTLE WAS PURE FROM THE BLOOD OF ALL MEN

This will be best explained by a reference to what is said on the same subject and almost in the same words by the prophet Ezekiel, in the third chapter of his prophecy” Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered: but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; (or because he takes warning,) also thou hast delivered thy soul.” Here you see involved the same principle as that of which the Apostle speaks, and it explains what the Apostle meant. You know also that in scripture the blood is said to be the life. Of course this language is figurative: the life of the soul is called its blood; and for the reason that I have just mentioned. To be clear from the blood of men, then, is to be clear of the charge of unfaithfulness to their souls. To be clear from the blood of all men in the sense in which the apostle affirms himself to be so, means that he was not to blame if they should lose their souls: he had discharged his duty to them: if their souls were lost they were answerable for it, not himself. In further remarking upon this passage, I design to notice the three following thoughts -

I. That the soul is of infinite value.

II. That it can not be lost without infinite guilt somewhere; because infinite responsibility must be incurred somewhere.

III. Point out the conditions upon which all who have this responsibility may be clear of the blood of the soul.

I. THAT THE SOUL IS OF INFINITE VALUE

This is a theme so vast that when an individual gives up his mind to consider and dwell upon it he is completely confounded. It is like eternity: the mind seems to topple in the attempt to grasp it, and become convulsed and agonised in the effort to conceive it. In the Bible the soul is always represented as of great value; and you all know that everything which is really valuable must ever belong to mind; for nothing can be of value except as a means of promoting the welfare and well-being of mind: nothing can be valuable in itself but that which constitutes the well-being of mind. Take all the mind out of the universe, and what is there left of any real value: Joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, all belong to the mind. Especially is this true of all intelligent mind the mind of moral agents; and it is, of course, the souls of moral agents of which I now speak. Of mere brute beasts we have the means of knowing but little; and therefore we can not say much about them. When we speak of the souls of men, we refer to some things that are believed to be immortal.

Now let me say, the first thought in reference to the value of the soul is this, its eternity of existence it must live forever! When souls have once began to be, they will never cease to be: they will grow older and older, and live onward and onward and onward as long as God shall live! Now think of that! I must not extend my remarks nor longer dwell upon it. But another consideration is, that from the very nature of mind it must be either happy or miserable; and further, that as the mind is so enduring, its enjoyments or sufferings will be continually and everlastingly upon the increase. This must be so as the result of a natural and necessary law. The means of greater happiness or misery will increase. The mind will go on progressing in knowledge, and consequently the power of the mind and its capacity for enjoyment or misery will be forever enlarging. But I must not extend my remarks upon this thought. I have dwelt considerably upon this on a former occasion, when I preached on “the Infinite Value of the Soul,” and therefore there is the less need for enlarging upon it now.

I proceed to say in the next place, by way of elaborating a little the thought just now presented, that the soul when it once begins to exist will go on enjoying or suffering forever and ever, and that its capacity for enjoyment or suffering also increases with its duration; and its capacity at any time in a future state will be full of either the one set of feelings or the other. And further, it is easy to see that the period must arrive when each individual shall be either enjoying or suffering more than would fill the conceptions of all finite creatures. If you could unite in one mind all the intellect of the universe at this moment excepting only that of God himself it would not be capable of either the joy or the suffering that may be predicated of any single mind at some period in the future. Indeed such a mind would fall infinitely short of realising that of which every soul at some point of eternity will be capable. Every individual in this house now, the youngest child or the weakest mind, will have to live forever, after the elements shall have been melted by the fire, and the universe have rolled together as a scroll and passed away with a great noise; and the time, therefore, must come when each of you, whatever your grasp of mind now will be able to look back upon the lengthened ages which you shall have lived, the vast number of circles which shall have rolled away, and remember all your sorrows and your joys, and be able to say, Ah! I have enjoyed, or suffered, as the case may be, in my personal experience more than all the creatures of God has ever suffered or enjoyed before I was born, or before I came to this place.

And when he has said that, he will be infinitely short of the truth. The period will arrive when the youngest child in this congregation will be able to say, I am older now than was any creature of God when I was born; aye! than were the aggregate age of all the intelligences of God's universe when I first began to be, and infinitely more experienced now than they all were then. Yes, and I have received more favours, mercy, and grace from God now, than they all had received when I first started into existence. And they all have been progressing and receiving additional favours just as I have. They are as far ahead of me now as they were then, for God has not confined his favours to me. The period will arrive when the last admitted inhabitant of heaven will be able to say, I know more of God now than they all knew when I came here; I am older now than they all were then. My single cup of knowledge will not hold more than at that time all theirs combined that indeed which runs over the side of mine would have filled theirs. But what have you said even when you have said this? Behind there lies an eternity still; you may roll on the waves of the ocean in that direction forever, for there is neither shore nor bound; neither height, nor depth, nor bottom; infinity is on every side!

How many hundreds of years has Paul been in heaven, and with him associated his spiritual children, those who were converted under his ministry! At some period in eternity the youngest child now alive, or ever will live, who gets to heaven, will be able to say, I now know a thousand times more about God and heaven than Paul did when he was upon earth, or than all the church of God combined knew at that time. (But after all, this is only a very faint conception of eternity and the progress of the mind in a future state.) Draw out the thought to any possible or conceivable extent: let any computation be made: let your mind stretch itself to its utmost tension, and what then? Why you have only just set your foot on the threshold of eternity: you are no nearer to the end than when you made the first step. The joy of heaven is always and absolutely perfect: the soul will be continually and forever rising and rising nearer to God, but there will never be any approaching to a close in anything there, seeing that everything is absolutely infinite! Now turn it over and look at the other side. Think if an individual who goes on sinning, and sinning, just as if there was no such place as hell! There was a first time when you consented to sin, and there was a first pang of conscience in your little mind, and a tear gathered in your little eye. Could anybody have looked into your little heart, and beheld that twinge of your little mind, and seen that heavy sigh, could it have been supposed that you would ever sin again? Ah! But you have repeated it again and again, and on you have gone until now! Just think then for a moment of that individual going into eternity! Then all restraint is taken away. The pleasures of sin too are all cut off; and all good influences have died away forever. He has received all his good gifts and good things. He abused God's mercy, rejected God's gospel, grieved God's Spirit, done despite to the Spirit of grace, and went on in sin; and now, therefore, he is sinning with increasing vigour rushing on in sin! Ah! think of the many sorrows, the many agonisings, the many hours of remorse that the sinner has to endure even here; but then, in a future world, when conscience will do its duty perfectly, when there is no diverting the attention from his true condition; when he can not shut his eyes to the truth; what will be his agony and remorse then? When he feels that his soul is lost, and lost forever? He can not repent of his sins then. No! but he goes on sinning still. Sinner, if you be numbered with the lost, the period in that awful eternity will arrive when you will have sinned more than all the devils in hell have sinned up to the present hour! All the devils in that world have not yet created such a source of misery,

as at some period you will have done if you are lost! Nay! All the devils, and all the wicked men who have left our world to be their companions in woe, have not in the aggregate committed as many sins as you will be able to claim as your own. The period must arrive when to attempt to number your sins would be an inexpressible source of the deepest agony. Who can count them? Who can compute them? What but an infinite mind could look at them without being so overcome as to wail out in the agonies of despair? if the mind was not infinitely holy.

There is no real believing in immortality, taking it as a truth into the mind, and contemplating it from any point of view, without an individual feeling as if his nerves were on fire with such convictions as these. But I must not enlarge upon this, or I should keep you here all night. I proceed in the next place to show

II. THAT NO SOUL OF SUCH INFINITE VALUE CAN BE LOST WITHOUT SOMEBODY INCURRING AN INFINITE AMOUNT OF RESPONSIBILITY AND GUILT

God is in a three fold sense the owner of every one of these souls. First, he created them all. Secondly, he preserved them all, and thirdly, he redeemed them all, by the precious blood of Christ. They cost him an infinite price, and he will not see them lost without making inquisition for blood. By a word he gave existence to the material universe. He can speak, and by the energy of his own word, world rises upon world, and system upon system, and by the same means he can people them all; but thus he could not redeem sinners. They, having sinned, were spiritually dead, and incurred the penalty of the Divine law; and to save them from the destruction thus impending was a different work to that of creation, and could not be performed by the going forth of his fiat. To redeem these souls was a work that cost him an infinite price. To ordain these laws by which they came into existence, was comparatively a trifling performance although that required the power of a God but to redeem you, sinner, to purchase you back, to relieve you from the penalty of the Divine law; to make an atonement that God might be just and yet save you cost an infinite price! God's beloved and only Son! for more than thirty years endured intense suffering, labour, persecution, and misrepresentation for you, and finally, your redemption cost him his life. Ah! under the charge of blasphemy the Son of God must die for you and for me! God, for man gave his son, his only son, his well beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. the Son of God must die! What a sacrifice! It was infinite! Think brethren, of the immense self-denial to which heaven was subjected! Think of that work which, shall I say, the family of the Divine Trinity; what shall I say? the glory of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, combined to carry on with the greatest self-denial; and all this to save the soul! What a testimony is this to its value! We learn here God's opinion of the value of the soul. Think what self-denial on the part of the Father, that he could consent to fit off his only and well beloved Son as a missionary to this world. What must the inhabitants of heaven have thought of it? What a scene must there have been in heaven when the Son of the Eternal Father was fitted off as a missionary to save this dying world!

We talk about missionaries to the heathen, and the self-denial which they have to practice, and we get up meetings when they are going to sail for distant climes, that we may manifest our sympathy and mingle our tears with theirs, sing hymns to God, and

pray together and give them our blessings and our prayers; and all this is highly proper; but what must have been the state of things when it was announced in heaven that the Son of God was going as a missionary to this world to save us rebels by his blood! There must have been tears of grief and also of inexpressible joy at what was going forward, sympathy for the inhabitants of this world, astonishment at the love of God, and wonder at the undertaking of the Son of God. The whole scheme, when it was first published in heaven, must have filled every part of that world with unutterable joy and sympathy. O, how many millions of hearts were united in sympathy with this wonderful mission which the Son of God had undertaken.

Now mark! God has committed to each of you one of these immortal souls; and made provision for its eternal life, although it was doomed to die, and he has enjoined it upon each one to take care of his soul. He asks you, "what will you give in exchange for your soul?" "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" In every way he expresses his own idea of the infinite value of the soul. He has charged every man to look to make it his first business to secure it from eternal death. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" and those who do this he promises shall lose nothing by it" And all other things shall be added unto you;" everything else that you need shall be thrown in, if you will only be careful not to lose your soul! "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." This is the charge that is given to every man! This is the solemn charge that is given to every woman! I commit to you an immortal soul; take care you do not lose it! I prize it infinitely. I have given my Son to die for it. I love it with an everlasting love! But I can not save it without your concurrence; I must have your consent; I must have your heart; I must have your sympathy. Take care that you do not lose it; but it is impossible, from the nature of the case, to save it without your consent. Take care that you set about its salvation! Let this be your first, your great, your perpetual concern the saving of your soul. O take care of this soul!

But again: it is not only an infinite gift which an individual has received in charge in respect of his own soul; but all those receiving the gift have a charge given with respect to the souls around them. Ministers, especially, have received this charge. "Son of man," says God, to every one of them, mark what I say, "I have set thee a watchman to the house of Israel; hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked man thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul."

Again: he has given a solemn charge to the church at large on this subject, and of course to each individual member of the church, not only to regard his own soul, but to watch, take care, remember, pray for, warn, and exhort, and labour for the souls of those around him. Christian parents, teachers, brothers, sisters, and all classes of Christians are to take care of their own souls, and also of the souls of those around them. "What I say unto one I say unto all, watch."

Again: God has also laid a charge upon all men to love their neighbours as themselves, to care for the souls of their neighbours as they would for their own. Every wicked

man is bound to love God, to love the soul of his neighbour, and to love his own soul; and not to neglect his own soul nor the souls of those under his influence. But I must pass in the next place to notice in a few words

III. THE CONDITIONS UPON WHICH ALL WHO HAVE THIS RESPONSIBILITY MAY BE CLEAR OF THE BLOOD OF THE SOUL

And let me say, it is perfectly plain that we can not be clear of the blood of souls unless we have done what we wisely and properly could to prevent their being lost. Of course, if we live in sin ourselves, we are guilty of our own blood; and if we do not do our duty by others we are not clear of their blood. It may be useful to advert, for a moment, to the different classes of duty, which arise out of, and attaches to the various relations in which men stand. Ministers, for instance, are public teachers, and as such they must be “instant in season and out of season;” they must preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; they must lay themselves on the altar and not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. They must not keep back anything that is profitable to their hearers; they must select such truths as they think most needful to be known, and faithfully declare them, and seek zealously to apply them to the hearts and consciences of those to whom they minister; and further, they must live in such a manner as to show that in their own hearts they believe what they preach. They must not think that they will be clear from the blood of souls, merely because they publish the truth with their lips; they must preach also in their temper and life; they must be true and serious teachers in everything. Church officers, deacons, and others, also ought to consider their responsibility: let them remember that it is great; and that they can be clear from the blood of souls only by living in such a manner as to be what they ought to be in every relation which they sustain.

Next, take parents; see what great responsibilities they have. Only think. They are exerting a greater influence over their children than all the world beside, and as a natural result, they will do more for or against the souls of their children than all other beings in the world. They begin the work of life or death, so far as influence is concerned; they also carry it on and ripen it; and if their children are lost, because they have neglected to do their duty, their hands are red to the elbows with their children’s blood! Think of that! See that mother’s hand. What! has she been murdering her children? What is she about? She lives not, prays not, labours not for the salvation of her children! O, mother! What are you about?

There is not time, of course, to descend into all the relations of life, and show how responsibility attaches itself to them all; but let what I have said be suggestive. You may apply it to Sabbath school teachers, missionaries, brothers and sisters, young converts, and older Christians for each one sustains peculiar responsibilities; and no one can be guiltless of the blood of souls who does not do his duty, whatever it may be, who does not labour faithfully, as God shall give him an opportunity, and in the spirit and with the power which God offers to clothe him with, for the salvation of the souls of men.

Once more: of course it is expected of ministers that they shall warn, exhort, and rebuke with all long-suffering and doctrine.

But having dwelt this much upon the three leading thoughts, I must proceed to make some remarks.

First, to have a clear conscience in respect of this great matter is of inestimable value. Now, for example, what an infinite consolation it must be to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to know that nothing which could have been wisely and benevolently done for the salvation of men was omitted that everything which could be done for this great end by an infinite and enlightened benevolence was done, nothing omitted; so that when God sees the sufferings of the wicked of the whole universe, when he looks at them and pours his eye over them, and listens to their terrible wailings, just think of the consolation he will have in being able to say, I am clear of their blood! I am clear! I call the universe to record that I am clear!

Why, I suppose this to be one of the great objects of the general judgment, that God, if I may use such an expression may clear up his character, and vindicate his conduct in the presence of the entire universe; and bring all created intelligence to pronounce sentence of deserved damnation upon the wicked. At the present, we can not pronounce upon God's conduct any further than the law of our own intelligent consciousness affirms that he must be right, as so far as he has condescended to explain himself to us; but mark! the time is coming when he will reveal everything to us; every transaction of the divine government shall be disclosed; at a period when suns and moons have ceased to rise and set; and days and years, as we number them, have ceased to cycle away; when men shall have ceased to grow, and their eyes are not dim with age, for they have ceased to die, and are immortal; then the time shall come to consider the whole matter. And God possesses the means, for this infinite mind has recorded all the facts; and thus he will bring into perfect remembrance the transactions of the entire universe from first to last. Then doubtless, he will explain the reasons for his own conduct, and show the design he had in the creation, and in all the providential arrangements of his government; then every mouth shall be stopped, not one will be able to say a single word more of the impropriety of anything that God has done, and the whole world will become guilty before God: everything that he has done will receive the unanimous consent of the entire universe: they will declare that he is infinitely far from the least fault in all this matter, when he has placed everything in such a light, that there can be no doubt of his perfect wisdom and benevolence. Then he will know that they know, as he now knows, and will eternally know, that he has done all that infinite love, and power, and wisdom could do to save those immortal souls that he regarded as of such infinite value.

Again: suppose God's conscience condemns him, that he knows he has done that which his own infinite mind must pronounce wrong and unbecoming in himself to do, who does not know that such a thought would fill his infinite mind with sorrow and remorse all through eternity, rolling onward and onward and onward, through a life of accumulating misery. Suppose, we say, that he could accuse himself of any error, or wrong, or oversight, or anything that he should have attended to, or could have done wisely, but did not do, for the salvation of souls why, it would fill his own mind with a pang that would really make it an infinite hell!

But there will be no such thing. Right over against this the eternal consciousness of being clear will fill his infinite mind with satisfaction. When the universe look upon the

ten thousand millions of murdered souls yea, more than can ever by computed that shall stand revealed at the day of judgment, the question will be asked, Who has committed these murders? God says, I AM CLEAR! The Father says, I AM CLEAR! The Holy Ghost says, I AM CLEAR! Now then, inquisition must be made for blood. Who has been guilty of this deed? What deeds of death are here? What dreadful things have been done? Who are the guilty parties?

Once more: Paul said to those to whom he had preached, that they knew very well, from their own observation, that he was clear of their blood; and he called upon them again to make a record of the fact that he might take it with him and use it at the solemn judgment, and confront them with it before the throne of God; and thus prove by their own testimony that he was clear from the blood of them all. What consolation this is for a faithful minister. Again: it must be a dreadful thing on the other hand for an unfaithful minister to meet his people in the day of judgment! Indeed it is a dreadful thing for such a minister to leave a people amongst whom he has been labouring. Suppose he leaves them with conscious misgivings, or direct accusations, you have been an unfaithful minister, you have been seeking your own popularity for his conscience may perhaps accuse him of that you have laboured for filthy lucre, you have been indolent, you have truckled to the most false and pernicious sentiments; in short, you have not rightly represented God and his gospel, and have concealed the truth lest it should give offence to men. Suppose conscience speaks thus. You have sought to create a reputation for yourself; but you have not laboured for the conversion of souls! Ah! you will soon have to die, and they also will depart into eternity to whom you have ministered. How do you expect to meet these souls in the solemn judgment? You will have to meet them face to face. What a meeting that will be. Yes, we shall meet again; we shall meet at the bar of God, and see him face to face. What will be the object of our meeting at that awful tribunal? Why, for God to tell the universe that he has done everything that he wisely could for the salvation of your souls; and you to give an account of the manner in which you have received or rejected his offers of mercy! Now we are all going on, and will shortly appear before the great white throne, on which shall sit the Judge in terrible majesty, with the heavens and the earth all fleeing from his presence; then the books shall be opened; yea, and all the dead shall be judged out of those books; and the sea shall give up its dead. Never was I at sea but these words have come with solemn emphasis to my mind, and I expect that in a few days, when I am on the mighty waters, they will recur to me again. "The sea shall give up the dead that is in it, and death and hell shall give up the dead that is in them." Ah! that will be a solemn time for ministers, for hearers, for parents, for children, for old and young; yes, it will be a solemn time for all, for saints and sinners both. Ah! we must each give an account of himself to God. What a responsibility is this.

I was a pastor for eighteen years, and I have laboured a great deal as an Evangelist; hundreds, nay thousands, therefore, who have sat under my ministry have gone before me into the eternal world; I shall follow them, and a great mass of others will follow me; and by and by we shall all be congregated. And what then? I know that it is one thing to talk, and another thing to walk right up with open face before God, and take his judgment in the matter. All secrets will then be laid open, the deepest intentions of the mind will be brought out and exhibited; every motive of my heart, and every sermon that I have preached, will be closely scanned and scrutinised. The truth upon every point will be brought up, and the whole universe will hear it. Ah, that will be a

solemn time for me, for mark! scores of thousands in America and in Great Britain, will either have to face me down or I them. Think of that! I am not going to say all that Paul said.

But once more: it must be an awful thing for congregations to meet their ministers, those who have had pastors, or heard only occasional preaching. Brethren, think of it. I have often thought that of all the relations existing in this world, that of pastor and people is the most solemn; for God will surely make inquisition for blood: he must require this at someone's hand; and it will be a solemn time for the pastor if he is to blame. No soul will be lost without the inquiry being made, Who has done this deed? Who has shed this blood? Who has filled the world of hell with mourning, lamentation, and woe? The cry will resound, loud and withering, WHO HAS DONE IT? As I have said, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost will say, *we have not done it*. The faithful in all ages will say, *we have not done it*. Who then has been guilty of this dreadful and accursed deed? I will tell you who. First, the sinner has done it himself; secondly, unfaithful ministers have done it; unfaithful deacons, elders, and leading members in the church have done it; unfaithful parents have done it; unfaithful children have done it; unfaithful brothers and sisters have done it; unfaithful Sabbath school teachers have done it; in short, all unfaithful men have done it; they are red with the blood of souls. You may know that they have been guilty of murder for the blood of their victims is upon their garments. Cast your eyes upon them and behold they are red from head to foot with the blood of men! All can see that they have done it; every man is covered with his neighbour's blood. See that man! his hands are imbued in the blood of his own soul, the souls of his children, or of his flock, and all those to whom he has been unfaithful. Oh, brethren, I say again, just think of it! See that murderer standing over his victim, his weapons reeking in blood; he is caught in the very act of murder; he can not deny it, for blood is upon him.

But see the unfaithful minister in the day of judgment, he comes on to his trial, but he can not look up. Those who sat under his ministry have caught sight of him, and they say to each other that is our minister; you remember his pretty tastes, his dazzling oratory, his graceful amblings, and his captivating blandishments; you remember about his pretty sermons, and you recollect how afraid he was to say hell, or let us know there was such a place; you recollect how he trimmed and truckled, how opposed to this thing and that thing, because it was not genteel, and was against all reform or progress in religion do you remember all that: well that was our minister; see him looking down: he is speaking, what does he say? What does he say? See the eye of the judge looking through and through that unfaithful minister, that man who pretended to preach the gospel, and dealt deceitfully with souls. How much guilt there is upon him! What an awful thing that must be! How dreadful his position.

But once more: I have sometimes in my own experience had great searchings of heart on this matter, lest I should have preached myself instead of the gospel. Thousands of times when I have pressed myself close up, I have had fear lest the blood of souls was upon me. When I have heard that this man and that man was gone, who had sat under my ministry, I have often asked myself, Have I done my duty by that man? was I faithful? or was I indolent and unfaithful? Did I shun to declare the whole counsel of God? I have often thought of this also and I say it, not boastfully as you know, that I could say so far as I know myself I had never kept back what I thought the people

wanted most to know; that I never kept back what I believed the people most needed to be told, because I was either afraid of them on the one hand or any other motive on the other. I never had courage to keep back the truth. When people have said sometimes, how dare you preach this thing and the other, I have told them that I had not courage to disobey God, and rush to the solemn judgment with the blood of souls on my hands. Indeed I have no such courage! Whom should I fear, God or man. How much faith must a man have if he can not walk right up and tell the sinner the truth of God to his face. And if he can not do this, how can he walk right up the face of God and then give an account of himself to the great searcher of hearts! He who is more afraid of men, than of God, must be an infidel.

Once more: I have already intimated, that in the judgment, sinners will find themselves without excuse; and as in the case of Ezekiel, their blood will be upon their own head; but that is not all: it is also true that there may be moral guilt in not doing our duty, in not warning, praying, and labouring for our neighbours as we ought. I have also spoken of faithless ministers meeting their people at the day of judgment, and the disposition they will have to curse him. I have sometimes wondered if their strong feelings of hate will find vent; whether there will be an audible expression of them. For example, whether at the judgment the multitude whom the unfaithful minister has misled will be permitted to give audible vent to the natural feelings of indignation that burn within their breasts; whether they will be allowed to curse him. They will be wicked enough and have reason enough, but will they be allowed to curse him. They have more reason to curse him, perhaps, than all the world beside. More reason to say, O thou most accursed and wicked man, did you not trifle with my soul; did I not look up to you as my religious teacher; did I not yield myself up to your guidance; and did you not deceive me with lies, and by keeping from me the truth, by which I might have been saved and all here been well? Such feeling will exist; but will the judge permit them to find audible expression? If so, is it too much to suppose that they will hiss, and groan, and curse, while they weep and gnash their teeth! The same thing will doubtless also be true of parents.

But let me turn over this picture, and look upon another. What a meeting it will be when all the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and the prophets, Elijah, and Elisha, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and all the minor prophets, and all the apostles, and faithful ministers of a later time, shall assemble in heaven! I have often thought of that wonderful convention which took place when the Saviour was upon earth the most wonderful, perhaps that ever occurred in this world. You remember the history of the event. Christ took Peter, James, and John with him up into a mountain and was transfigured before them, and there appeared Moses and Elijah the two great representatives of the old dispensation. There was Moses, by whom came the law; and Elijah, who represented the whole race of prophets, in conference with the head of the church triumphant, about the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem, and the three representatives of the church militant. What a scene of wonder was that! We are told that the glory was so intense that the apostles were quite overcome, and Peter said, "It is good for us to be here; let us build three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." They were so near heaven, so filled with awe and delight, that they know not what they said.

Now just think for a moment how it will be by and by. Moses, for example, has been dead for thousands of years, and has long since become surrounded by a multitude who have found their way to heaven through his direct instruction, or by means of his writings which have been handed down from generation to generation; and all the saints will doubtless know Moses when they get there, of whom they have heard so much, as well as of the patriarch Abraham, and of the apostles and prophets; and when the newly arrived saint shall have a little time, after gazing at the wonders and glories of the place, he will look around for these ancient worthies, and perhaps shake them by the hand, and weep tears of gratitude and joy upon their necks.

Whitfield, who once stood in the pulpit in which I now stand, and the multitudes who heard his voice sitting in those pews in which you now sit, will meet in heaven. Think of that! How many thousands are gone that once saw and heard him; and they now find themselves again united in that blessed world. they are still rational and intelligent, and able to mingle their hearts and their joys; and the time will come when the whole church of God, pastors and people, will be gathered home to glory. O, how fast they are going. Why, since I have been in London I have heard of the departure of the Rev. Dr. Pye Smith, together with this man and that man, names with which I have been familiar even in America. And so we are all following on, fathers, mothers, ministers, brothers, sisters, all are going. How many of this congregation have taken their flight since I have been here! Just look around. Of how many have I heard it said, they are gone, they are gone! We shall all be gone presently; and that very soon. But what a glorious thought that when we meet in that world of light and joy, the heavenly Jerusalem, it will be to part no more at all. Those of us who shall have our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, we shall meet to say farewell or adieu no more.

When I read to you at the commencement of this service the chapter from which the text is taken, I omitted the last three verses, which I will read now:" And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him into the ship." What a beautiful parting: how deeply affecting. But I must not detain you. I have only to say this before I sit down; and to be sure I would do it with all humility, may I not ask you who have been my hearers since I have been in London, as a matter of justice to record tonight this fact, that according to my ability, I have dealt faithfully with your souls. I challenge you now to record this fact, for I am sure that you bear this testimony in your own consciences, will you bear it in mind at the solemn judgment, that so far as I have had ability I have kept nothing back that you needed to know. I do not say this boastfully: God will judge between us.

But some I fear I shall leave in their sins after all. Remember, I shall meet even you again. Do let me ask if you have yet begun the great work of preparing for the judgment. Have you not begun it yet? You have heard most solemn appeals and warnings; let me ask you once more, will you think? will you act? My dear hearers, will you rid me of all responsibility by saying, yes, yes, if I perish, it is not your fault, you have done your work faithfully, you have not daubed with untempered mortar, and I consent that the fact should be recorded in the solemn judgment that you are clear.

But I want not only to be able to feel the conviction of this in my own conscience, but that my record should be on high. I know it is vain for me to seek to justify myself, unless it is recorded in heaven that I have dealt faithfully with you. I trust I have. I shall see most of you probably no more, till we meet in the judgment; and oh, what a meeting that will be!

It is not my custom to preach farewell sermons, but when I have done my work to tear myself away, and leave the great Judge to seal up the record that shall be opened at the last day. Now all I have to say is this the last leaf connected with my ministry, and your hearing, in this place, is now to be folded and put away amongst the files of eternity to be exhibited when you and I shall stand before God in perfect light, with no self-excusing, no false pleas, we shall all be naked, honest, and open there. And now, sinner, may I beg of God to search my own heart and prepare me for that scene and to prepare you for it too. May I be allowed this once to call heaven and earth to record upon your souls, that in my weakness, and so far as I have had ability, I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, the gospel and the law, the rule of life, and opened, so far as I have been able, the gate of mercy, and shown you the heart of Jesus. Will you accept it? I must not add another word.

13. THE CERTAIN DOOM OF THE IMPENITENT

“He that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.” - Proverbs 29:1

There is nothing in the connection in which these words stand that require explanation; I shall, therefore, at once give you the outline of thought which I design to pursue.

- I. Notice the true idea of reproof
- II. Some of the ways in which god administers reproof
- III. The design of reproof
- IV. What it is to harden the neck, under reproof
- V. What is intended by being suddenly destroyed
- VI. What is intended by being destroyed without remedy

I. THE TRUE IDEA OF REPROOF

First, it does not necessarily enter into the idea of reproof that the individual reprov’d regards it, or look upon the events or circumstances which are designed to reprove, as a divine rebuke from God. Whatever is calculated in its own nature or relations to arrest the attention of the mind, and call men to a neglect of duty, or the obligation they owe to God, and the danger of their present condition, involves undoubtedly the true idea of reproof, whatever this may be.

II. THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD ADMINISTERS REPROOF

I observe first, that both the Bible and nature teaches that God exercises a universal providence. If it be true that God created the universe, he had a design in creating it; and if a design in its creation, it follows that he has made provision for the accomplishment of the design, what he had in its original construction that he has made provision for securing the end which he originally had in view. This is the true idea of divine providence. There have been started two or three different theories of divine providence. One is, that in the original creation, both of matter and mind, God furnished them with such laws as in their development should secure the great end for which he created the universe. Another theory of divine providence is, that God constantly superintends, and either by his own direct agency and superintendence, or through other agencies, to overlook and control and bring about what he designs and wills. Both these, however, agree in this, that the providence of God is universal. Both admit that God has control in some sense, if not in the same sense. In fact, God could not exercise control over the great events of the world, if he did not over the smaller ones also seeing that the one is made up of the others. Great events are made up of innumerable smaller ones; and if the smaller things are not under the divine direction, in such a sense as to be controlled by him, of course the great events made up of these smaller ones could not be either. The first system that I named is that of a general providence, which regards the whole universe as a vast machine, which having a law

impressed upon it at its creation to work out its results, does not need the divine superintendence. The second theory regards God as superintending and adjusting all the laws of the universe, whether of matter or mind, and are thus made to work out those great results at which God aims. This latter theory regards God as constantly interfering in the spiritual world, and often in the natural world, making such arrangements and adjustments to avert certain results which would certainly come to pass. Those who hold this latter theory believe also that with respect to moral agency it is free, and that God never interferes with man's will by his superintendence. Another theory supposes that the universe is partly governed by irresistible laws impressed upon it at the beginning, and partly by direct superintendence; yet all admit that the providence of God is in some sense universal that God is immediately concerned in all that occurs, or knows what is about to occur; and he does not prevent it, because he knows it is wiser to let the law take its course. Now, when God created Adam and Eve he knew what would afterwards occur; and although he did not prevent their fall, he took care that their conduct should not defeat the great end for which he created the universe. Thus, God suffers everything to be done that is done, in the sense that he knows it is about to occur; or he is actively employed by positive agency in bringing everything about. God, in fact, has some design in everything that occurs in the whole universe, whether he actually originates it by positive and direct means, or only suffers it to occur, and so overrules it as to bring good out of it. Now, observe, God oftentimes administers reproof in his providential government. For example, the favours which he bestows upon those who are wicked, what are they but reproofs. Suppose a man should injure you, and you should show him some great kindness, would he not understand it to be a reproof? Suppose you met a man in the street that had done you some great injury, and you should show him some great favour, would he not regard it as a reproof? Take the case of Mr. Whitfield. When he was preaching on one occasion, an individual rose up and accused him of a great crime a thing of which he had never been guilty but the individual desired to injure him, and ruin his character in the eyes of the people. Well, what did he do? why, when he came out of the pulpit, he called the individual to him and gave her a guinea and turned away. This was intended to be a reproof; and doubtless it made such an impression as she never got over. What did Christ say? "If thine enemy hunger feed him, and if he thirst give him drink; for by so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." Now, whether it was wise in Mr. Whitfield to act as he did or not, it was evidently intended as a reproof! And does not God intend the favours which he bestows upon the wicked as reproofs? They may think that they receive them because they are deserved: their self-righteousness may say this; but who does not see that this is not true? "He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, on the just and on the unjust. "How can men prowl about at night in the dark, and not feel ashamed and rebuked when the sun shines upon them in the morning? I knew a man once who had been quarrelling all night, and when the sun shone upon him in the morning, he was so cut to the heart, that he was led to repent of his sins. He felt astonished that God should suffer his sun to shine upon such a wretch as he knew himself to be. It is wonderful that when men have been engaged in some great wickedness, and God comes right out and shows them some great favour, that they do not feel infinitely ashamed of themselves, and blush and hang their heads down for very shame. The fact is, although some men may, on account of their self-righteousness, suppose that these things are given as a reward for their goodness that all God's favours are so many reproofs; as if God should say, you have refused to obey my commands, you have broken my law, you have taken my

name in vain, you have profaned my Sabbaths, while I have fed you, and clothed you, and given you a home and friends; what do you think of yourself? you live in sin and yet I keep you alive; I watched over you in the dark, and then you rise up in the morning and rebel against me. I have done all this for you and yet you abuse me still; what do you think of yourself? See how much love I have shown towards you, how many good things I have done for you, how I have persevered in doing you good, and yet you have rebelled against me; are you not ashamed of yourself? Now God does not bestow his favours without some design; and that is to lead the sinner to repentance. "Knowest thou not that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" He gives sinners such a look sometimes that one would suppose would kill them, and break their hearts, and make them burst out into loud weeping. When they abuse him, he steps up to them with his hands full of blessings, but says nothing. How many times has he done so to sinners in this house? What do you think of it? You have forfeited your life and exposed it to eternal death. Have you not had reason to suppose that a thunderbolt would fall upon your head? But instead of that, God opens your hand and supplies you with all needful good. Do you suppose that he does this because he approves of what you have done? You did not understand it so, but that he meant to reprove you for what you had done. By these gifts he meant to reprove you for your ingratitude and your sin; just as you by the same conduct would have meant to reprove an individual who had done you some great injury. You tried to shame him out of his bad conduct, to break his heart, and to make him feel how wrong and wicked his conduct was.

Again: by judgments God oftentimes administers reproof. By judgments, I mean those things that are not regarded by men as merciful dispensations, but as very untoward circumstances. Now, they are designed, everyone of them to administer reproof and when mercy fails, judgment shall take its place. God interposes in a great many ways to save men. Sometimes persons are, no doubt, warned by dreams, although I do not think that dreams can be relied on, because they are very generally occasioned by the state of the health or the nervous system; yet it is manifest that they are oftentimes providential, and have been so in every age of the world. There have been striking instances in which persons have been warned by dreams; I have heard many such things related myself, as no doubt other persons have also; and sometimes, doubtless, they are to be received as warnings. President Edwards relates a very remarkable and striking instance of warning given to a man by means of a dream. In his congregation there was a notorious drunkard, who had for many years absented himself from the house of God and given himself up to strong drink. One night this man had a dream, and he dreamed that he went to hell. I need not enter into the circumstances as to what he saw there, because that would take too long, and be quite unnecessary. However, he was greatly agonised, and prayed to the Lord to give him one trial more, and let him return to earth: well, the Lord gave him leave to do so for one year, and if he was not reformed in that time, he should surely return to hell. The man, as might be supposed, was greatly distressed about this dream, and he went to President Edwards in the course of a few days and related it to him. President Edwards told him that he ought to regard it as a providential warning from God, and that it was unwise not to regard it as such. For a time, the man broke off his old vice, and betook himself to the house of God. few months only, however, passed away before he went on in his old career, till he became as bad, if not worse than ever. One day he had been drinking a great deal, and became very intoxicated, and being unable to get home, he was carried into a carpenter's shop, and laid down among the shavings: in the night he awoke, and

attempted to go down the stairs, when he fell and broke his neck. As this dream had seemed very remarkable to President Edwards, he noted it down in his common-place book at the time that it was related to him, and when he heard of the man's death, he referred to the entry, and found to his amazement that it was just a year that very night. I mention this fact for the purpose of illustrating what I mean, that oftentimes, God in dreams, as well as various other ways, reproves persons for their sins. He does it by his Word, his writings, by sermons, and indeed by every way this is calculated to remind the sinner that he is not doing his duty.

Again: the Holy Spirit reproves, by convincing the sinner of his sins, and producing in his mind visitations of remorse. But I can not enter further upon this, and show how the Holy Ghost works upon the conscience by every means likely to wake the sinner up to a knowledge of what he is about. I come then, in the next place to inquire.

III. THE DESIGN OF REPROOF

Undoubtedly it is designed to effect a reformation. He means to secure this end by forbearance. By reproof he tries to convert and save him if he can; he uses every means to make men trophies of mercy; he intends to leave all men without excuse. I may appeal to every sinner in this house, if God has not pursued a course with you calculated to leave you without excuse! At one time, perhaps, he pursued you, or is pursuing you with loving-kindnesses and tender mercies, as if he would melt you down by acts of forbearance and love. But when he finds that will not do, then he uses the rod. When you resist his mild reproof, he will turn and smite you. By all means he reproves you. But are you reformed? For that is his great object. In the next place -

IV. WHAT IS INTENDED BY HARDENING THE NECK UNDER DIVINE REPROOF?

You observe the language is figurative. Reference is made by it, you observe, to the bullock working with a yoke upon his neck. The practice of using bullocks in this manner is not, I find, so common here as it is in America and some other lands. When they are so employed, the neck becomes callous. The yoke often produces a very hard substance upon the neck, by the constant pushing against it. The men that are spoken of here are represented as constantly pushing against God's providence, and thus making their necks hard. The figure is very striking. The bullock when it first wears the yoke becomes sore-necked; sometimes quite unable to bear it on for days, but by degrees it becomes so accustomed to it that its neck gets completely hardened. And thus the conscience of the sinner becomes quite callous under reproof if he does not yield to it. Reproof may be administered, but he does not feel it any more than the bullock does the yoke.

V. BUT WHAT IS INTENDED BY BEING SUDDENLY DESTROYED?

Opposition and destruction will always go together. The Bible teaches this in every place. "When they shall cry peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, like travail upon a woman with child and they shall not escape." By resisting reproof men become hardened, so that they do not fear the Divine judgments. The conscience becomes so stupefied, that men lose the sense of danger; and it is just then

that the danger in reality becomes greater. But although men have been heedless of danger, yet “damnation slumbereth not,” and therefore it is that God says, they shall be suddenly destroyed.

But let me say again: it shall come upon them sooner than they expect. “God is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;” and therefore he uses means so long as there is any hope; yet after destruction will come “suddenly,” and much sooner than they expect. This was the case with the old world. God warned them by Noah for one hundred and twenty years, but they took no heed, and the flood came suddenly, when they did not expect it. But I must pass over this, and inquire -

VI. WHAT IT IS TO BE DESTROYED “WITHOUT REMEDY!”

How often I have been reminded of this text when I have stood by the dying bed of not a few individuals. It was no use trying to help them, for God had determined to destroy them. The minister is sent to pray for the dying man. He can not pray: God will not hear. No matter if the entire universe interposes: he will not alter his purpose. How often have I felt shocked and horrified under such circumstances. When God makes up his mind to destroy a man, every chance of his being saved has passed away. Having been often reproved he is suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy. All the means that men can employ will be without avail. There is no help for such a man in the whole universe.

REMARKS

First: it should always be understood that there is a relation between every part of the Divine economy; and sometimes indeed things in providence occur under such circumstances that even infidels will say it is the work of God; and not infrequently, these providential dispensations will make the ears of good men to tingle. God will reveal himself in such a manner as to shock them.

Again: it is often very affecting to see how God will interpose to save several by the destruction of one. He takes away one of a circle, that those who remain may take warning. I have often noticed such things myself. One member of the family is a great stumbling block to the others; God steps in and cuts him down in order that he may save the rest. How striking such providences are. Several such cases have occurred in my own experience since I have been in the ministry, and many others have been repeated to me. Individuals have given themselves up to oppose revivals of religion; have agreed to resist and stand out against all efforts to revive the cause of God, and have been cut down in a most signal and awful manner. I could name cases, but is it not important to do so, as such events are by no means uncommon.

But again: every sermon you hear is designed to be a reproof to you if you are in an impenitent state. And let me say, reproof will have some effect it will either make you better or worse. Always understand this. Every word of God and every providence will either be a savour of life or death to the soul. It should be remembered that the whole system of providence is but a vast system of Divine instruction. Some people try to make a distinction between the word of God and the providence of God; but they should understand that the lessons taught are the same, and that the God who created

the universe is the same that dictated the Bible. Every event in providence is teaching men lessons just the same as the Bible; "Whether they will hear or whether they will forbear." If men will not receive the truth of God's word, they can not help being instructed as they pass along under his providence and works. Everything speaks to them and reproves them. "He speaketh once, yea twice," whether men regard it or not. Men are therefore preparing for either heaven or hell. Every step each of you takes is conducting you nearer and nearer to the solemn judgment, and everything cries out, "Prepare to meet thy God!" Sinner! beware, you are passing on to the judgment, and God's voice is everywhere loudly calling upon you to be ready to meet him: let the voice be heard!

Once more: the danger of men is great, just in proportion as they cease to be effected by a sense of it, and reproofs cease to be regarded as Divine admonitions just in that proportion is their destruction hastening. When men feel the most secure, if they are living in sin, then destruction is most certain; and of course when it does come it will be sudden, because they do not expect it at all.

Now mark, this is not arbitrary on the part of God: it is a natural consequence of the sinner's conduct. God admonishes and warns in a thousand ways; and he tells men if they will not give heed he will surely punish them; and if he did not, they would despise him themselves. He does not lead men to expect one result, and then bring about another: he is honest with them, and what he says, he will do, depend upon it. It is often very affecting to see what a state of mind men will manifest sometimes when they have found themselves being drawn into the vortex. The providence of God in its dealings with men has sometimes seemed to me like the Niagara Falls in America. The water of this immense cataract pours over the rocks in one great broad, mighty fall, as smooth as glass; and comes down upon the water below with such wonderful force as to cut right into it. No foam is visible at the place where it enters, but it rushes along under the surface, and then rises again at about a mile and a half distant, and rolls itself up in mighty masses of spray and foam. The water thus forms an eddy of vast extent. Towards the edges of the circle the power is not very great, but increases every inch as you near the centre, where everything that reaches it is instantly engulfed. The sinner has got into such a circle, you call and tell him that he is in danger, but he does not believe it. As you see the dangers increase, you raise the voice still higher, but he regards it not. By and by he hears the mighty roar: he then sees his danger, but it is too late, he is swallowed by the mighty vortex; "suddenly destroyed." The whole universe may call, but his soul will be lost though black as hell!

Sinner! O sinner! How long shall God warn you? How long will you despise reproof? Be admonished: be warned: be entreated: be persuaded. Cast away your sins: put away your rebellious heart and your neck of iron. Sinner, make up your mind to give your heart to God. Let your language be, "Speak, Lord; thy servant heareth." Will you say, O my Father, my God, I will sin against thee no more: I am ashamed; I am confounded; I have received good things from thee, and have abused thee for them. Thou hast offered me salvation, but I have refused it! Can I hope for forgiveness? Can I be forgiven? But forgiven or not, I will not go on in this way any longer: God being my helper, I will not. I will renounce my rebellion against God this night: now, in this house: this shall be the last hour that God shall have to complain of me, for I will no longer harden my neck against the calls of his providence. I now yield myself up to

God, I give up all my sins, I consecrate myself to him; the rest of my life shall be the Lord's. My time, talents, property, everything I have shall be yielded up to his honour and glory. Will every sinner now in this house, thus renounce their sins, and give themselves up to God and say, here we are, Lord, at thy feet; O write thy name upon our hearts, and let us henceforth live entirely to thee!

14. THE AWFUL INGRATITUDE OF THE SINNER

*“And they have rewarded me evil for good,
and hatred for my love.” - Psalm 109:5*

David was the type of Christ, and it was common for him to write Psalms in which there was manifestly much reference to the Messiah. The spirit of prophecy within him speaks many things in these Psalms, particularly applicable to himself as the type of Christ, but applicable also to Christ himself; and in this case he speaks both of himself and of Christ. Some portions of the Psalms are quoted by the New Testament writers as having been spoken of Christ; and this passage is evidently of the same character. In proceeding to discuss this subject I shall,

I. Notice a few particulars in which Christ may be said to love the sinner and be hated in return

II. Notice some particulars wherein sinners reward him evil for good

I. NOTICE A FEW PARTICULARS IN WHICH CHRIST MAY BE SAID TO LOVE THE SINNER AND BE HATED IN RETURN

I shall now run rapidly over a few particulars in which sinners reward Christ evil for good and return hatred for his love. Christ gives sinners their very existence. They are indebted to him for all they have and are; all things are given over into his hands, and he administers the government of God for the benefit of sinners. He preserves their lives, and bears with them continually in the midst of their sins: He is long-suffering towards them; He lived in this world, denying himself for them; for their sakes He suffered the deepest poverty and disgrace. Whoever was in such deep distress as Christ was a great part of his life! - whoever was in greater poverty! He says, “the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.” He is represented in the Gospel as having become poor, “that we, through his poverty, might become rich.” He suffered himself to be covered with the bitterest reproaches for our sakes, until he complains that reproach had broken his heart.

Everyone who has been reproached for doing good will form some idea of what he means by saying this. Again, he laboured with such zeal for the good of souls that he says, “the zeal of my house hath eaten me up.” He toiled by day and by night, from town to town, to do them good, and many times he spent whole nights in prayer. We have reason to believe that at the early age of thirteen his appearance was much beyond his years. It is said of him that “his visage was marred beyond any man’s.” He is represented as bearing your griefs and carrying your sorrows. You recollect how beautifully this is represented by Isaiah. I will read some passages in which this is particularly brought out - “Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.”

This is descriptive of what Christ has done for sinners. He suffered death at their hands, and then - strange to tell! - turned right around and proposed to make the blood which they have thus murderously shed the very medium by which they might be

saved! Who has ever heard of such love as this? The very blood which their murderous hands have shed is made to atone for their sins. He is still as ready to do them good as ever - always living to befriend them, and sitting now at the right hand of God to make intercession for them; all sinners are spared from day to day, and kept in existence by him. You are spared, like the barren fig tree, through his intercession, when justice would otherwise cut you down. Notwithstanding all your abuse of him, he is still ever ready to step forth to preserve you when you will accept his offered mercy. When justice would cut you down he steps forward in your behalf, and that you are out of hell is solely owing to his prayer - " Oh! spare him yet." Having thus shown his love to the sinner, I shall,

II. NOTICE SOME PARTICULARS WHEREIN SINNERS REWARD HIM EVIL FOR GOOD

That the Jews did this is generally admitted. I have never heard anyone who believed the Gospel deny that Christ laboured assiduously for their good, and that they returned him hatred for his love. But do others do it? Yes, sinners, you do it, and that continually! He gives you life, and what do you do with that very existence in this world, which is only prevented from being snapped off by his intercession? I mean you, sinner; what are you doing with the life he gives and prolongs? What do you do with it? what have you always done with it? What! do you only use it to oppose his law and authority? Again, there is your time; how do you spend that? He spares you from day to day, and how do you occupy yourself? He gives you time, and commands you to repent - have you done so? Oh! no; but your whole existence is one continued act of opposition to him who has thus wonderfully befriended you! He has given you talents - what do you do with them? Wherein is your power? - education, property, talents, or influence? What do you render to him for all the good which he has bestowed upon you? Do you really render evil for all this good? Do you use your money, talents, and education against him? Ah! your impenitence tells the story! I need not bring a railing accusation against you. He gave you heaving lungs, and enables you to breathe, but every breath is breathed in opposition to him. What other gift of his providence have you that you are not using against him? And is not this rendering him evil for his good? Suppose a child is to do this to a parent - suppose your little ones use every gift you bestow on them against you. But again. It is remarkable moreover, that the more he gives, the more and more proud you wax, and the more stoutly you stand up against him. Just in proportion as he loads sinners down with blessings and obligations, instead of being conducted to him, they are the further from knowing him. He has multiplied their blessings, but every one of them is conscious of sin and rebellion against him. They wax rich and great in affluence and talent, and are surrounded with favours, and by-and-bye they become so proud and full of themselves - so great in their own esteem - that they will not suffer an Ambassador from Heaven to tell them the truth. How strange is this!

But let me say again, the longer he spares sinners the more abusive and presumptuous they become. See sinners, the older they get, the longer they are spared, the more they are loaded down with favours, till their heads are covered with the frosts of many winters, and the more rebellious, and stupid, and sottish in their sins they become! The longer he defers their punishment, the more they tempt his forbearance.

Again. That all sinners render to Christ evil for good, and hatred for his love is manifest from this; sin from its very nature, is a rejection of Christ's authority in all the relations which he sustains towards men. It is, moreover, a practical and public denial of their obligations to Christ. It is also an insult to his person, and an opposition to his efforts to do them and others good. All sin, from its very nature, is sympathy with hell, and antipathy to heaven. Moreover, sinners hate to be reminded of their obligations to Christ, and will not quietly submit to it even from their best friends. Many a husband in his sins will scarcely allow his pious wife, whose spirit has wept almost tears of blood over his soul, to speak to him about his duty. No. The fact that sinners render him hatred for his love is most evident. How much they are disturbed if they hear Christ spoken of, and his name praised! Go almost any where and you will find this opposition manifested.

It is plain that sinners do not sympathise with Christ's friends, but that they do actually sympathise with his enemies. This is clear and easily demonstrable, in a thousand ways, had I time to dwell upon them. I will notice one or two as they arise in my mind. Sinners show their hatred to him by their gratification in the things which grieve him, they make light of sin, and exult when religion is dishonoured by its professors. They manifest their gratification and instead of praying for the saints and trying to support them, under their temptations to disobey God, they actually throw obstacles in their way. They appear to approve of the temptation rather than grieve when it is not resisted. When saints sin, they triumph. See how ready they are to take up an evil report against their neighbours, especially should that neighbour profess Christianity. They would not feel this if they were Christ's friends, in any sense of the term. It is extremely unnatural for us to believe evil of those we love, and with whom we have sympathy. If sinners, therefore, had sympathy with Christ and his people it would be utterly unnatural for them to act thus towards them.

It is also extremely unnatural for us to promote the circulation of such reports concerning those who love Christ. We should be careful of the reputation of Christ's children if we loved them. Are sinners grieved when Christ and his cause are dishonoured by those who profess to fear his name? - and are they careful rather to conceal, than to disseminate that which is disgraceful concerning them? No! they are not only very credulous in believing scandal of this kind, but too frequently, manifest a corresponding diligence in circulating it. This enmity to Christ is a mortal enmity. The Jews displayed this to the fullest extent. They were not satisfied with anything short of his life. Sinners refuse to submit to Christ's authority and embrace the Gospel offer, and so far as their altered circumstances permit, they manifest precisely the spirit of the Jews of old who hung him on the accursed tree.

But again. This hatred of the sinner to Christ is supreme. There are more opposed to him and his work than to anything else in all the universe. On all other subjects how comparatively easily it is to gain adherents and make to yourselves friends. In many cases where the enmity has been of lengthened duration and intense to a degree, a change of circumstances will frequently reconcile the opponents. It is with political and social disagreements; even where the antipathy has become in a sense, hereditary on both sides, a circumstance sometimes arises which makes reconciliation a mutual advantage, and how speedily they become united! There are many remarkable cases on record of such persons having eventually become not only friends, but firm and

attached friends, to a degree corresponding with or perhaps even exceeding their former enmity. They have become not only willing to do each other good, but unwilling to say or even to believe that which is evil concerning each other. This is, in fact, quite a common occurrence. Where do you find enmity existing between parties which can not be overcome even by a moderate exhibition of kindness and love? But how is it with the sinner?

Few men readily understand how deep their enmity to Christ is, and in order to have a proper appreciation of this they must consider what Christ has done, what he is doing, and what he has promised to do for them. Suppose that in this city there are two men who have long been enemies. Suppose that this has gone on so long and arrived at such a pitch that their families have come to regard each other as mortal enemies simply because of their family name and relationship. They scarcely look at each other when they pass in the street. But suppose this ill feeling to be all on one side. Suppose the one man to have a deep-rooted enmity against the other. Suppose there had never been any actual quarrel, but that the one had continually misapprehended and abused the other, and followed him with persecution and slander from time to time. The other had done him good, treated him kindly, when embarrassed in business - lent him money and tried in every way to gain his confidence but all to no purpose.

The one is riding in the park and meets a dearly beloved son of the other in his carriage; the horses take fright and the son is all but thrown out. Mark how at the risk of his life, this gentleman rushes to save him: he seizes the horses by the bits and thus saves the life of his enemy's son. The young man, of course, is moved when he sees who it is to whom he is so greatly indebted. He goes home and relates the fact to his father who is much affected and hangs down his head.

"Did he know you?" he asked the son.

"Oh! yes; and he not only saved my life but kindly spoke to me in terms of encouragement, and blessed me."

This very night the father is aroused and discovers his house in flames. The very carpet is on fire beneath his feet. The house is ready to fall in. There is a terrible rush of the crowd in the streets; but there seems to be no way of escape, either right or left. The flames are pouring up the staircase and out of the just opened window. Just under these circumstances an individual comes rushing up the staircase and gathers up one after the other and hurries off to a place of safety. The women faint, the children scream; and their father on recovering, finds himself reclining in the arms of his deliverer. Ah! who is this deliverer? "Why this very man who a few hours ago hazarded his life to save my son! and he has now sadly burned himself to save me?" How effectually have those circumstances changed the relation which these two persons held towards each other! If he had strength sufficient remaining the father would fall on his knees to his deliverer and bathed his feet with his tears, and if the fire had spared his hair he would wipe them with it! Does he say, "don't you see that my heart is so hard that I can't love you notwithstanding?" No, indeed. Whenever you mention that man's name you mention the name of a friend; and aught that is spoken against him now will grieve him. He is ready now to confide in him - to think and speak well of him.

But now look at the enmity of the sinner, in spite of all that God daily and hourly does for him. When a little one and helpless he kept your little lungs in motion. How often his hand unseen interposed to save your life, when disease was dragging you pale and quivering down to the gates of death! As you have grown up he has followed you with kindness. When death has lurked in ambush he has always watched kindly over you, and you are tonight not only out of hell but able to come to the house of God. And after all this good how do you stand affected towards him? Has it produced any change in your heart? Ah! you are treasuring up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

I shall now proceed to point out a little more definitely this peculiar feature of the sinner's conduct - that really this opposition and hatred is rendered to him for his love. My object under this head is to show what is the *reason* of their opposition to Christ. In the first place that sinners have really no good reason for their hatred and opposition to Christ is admitted by everybody; and it is also admitted that this is done in defiance of his love, or at least regardless of it. They have nothing to hate him for, He has never been as men are partly good and partly evil, sometimes deserving well of sinners and sometimes deserving ill of them. They can't say that in some things he had done them good, but that he has done other things for which they have reason to hate him. No! They have nothing but *love* for which to hate him!

The real reason for this opposition is that he is their moral opposite. All his great love is in direct opposition to their selfishness. His infinite holiness is in direct contradiction to it; it is also a contradiction to say that one so opposite to Christ should not be opposed to him, opposed because he stands out in contrast right over against him! His infinite benevolence is in direct contrast to their selfishness, and while they entertain this selfishness it must be opposed to his benevolence; while they entertain a spirit of injustice they must stand opposed to his justice; while they continue to entertain a spirit of unmercifulness they must stand opposed to his justice; while they continue to entertain a spirit of unmercifulness they must stand opposed to his mercy; their falsehood to his truth, his righteousness to their unrighteousness. There are moral opposites, and it is impossible for sinners while in such a state of mind to be otherwise than opposed to him. It is not because he is evil that they are opposed to him; they do not hate him for that reason, but simply because he is good. They being evil, naturally hate one so diametrically opposed to them.

Again. It is impossible but that the very efforts he makes to save them from sin should excite their hostility. This has always been, and always must be the case. They love the yoke of their sins; and his pressing them to give them up and thus therefore while he insists on their doing what they are unwilling to do, this opposition will continue. The more persevering and long-suffering he is, the more will they oppose and hate him. By "hatred" I do not mean that sinners are always conscious of such a feeling; but there it is - a ceaseless resistance to all his efforts to do them good. Their carnal minds are at enmity against him.

This leads me to make a few general remarks, and the first is this - Nothing wounds a virtuous mind more deeply than ingratitude. Every person who has had experience on this subject knows that the consciousness of having done a particular favour to an ungrateful individual is deeply painful. Parents know what this is - they know how

bitter is filial ingratitude. Everyone who has done much good has felt this to some degree; they have never had, perhaps, in some cases hatred rendered for their love. This is a most grievous thing; from the nature of mind it is deeply wounding. Many of you perhaps know the bitterness of the sting you have felt when obliged to say of a child or someone you have greatly befriended - They have rendered me "evil for good," and "hatred" for my love.

At the same time this is nothing more amazing than the consciousness of having deserved well of those who hate you. It is a great satisfaction to be able to say, "Ah! I did not merit such treatment at their hands. It is rendering me "evil" for my "good." Christ will not fail to have this consolation - Sinner! are you glad of it? I need not ask the Christian for I know that he must rejoice at the thought. Christ will have this reflection when he sees the smoke of their torment rolling up and up forever and ever! I tried to do them good," he will say "and they not only vexed me without cause but they returned hatred for my love!" I ask you sinner, are you glad of it? If you persevere in your sins and die in them are you glad that Christ will be always able to say this! When you listen - if the inhabitants of hell are permitted - to the song of heaven, what will you say when you see that Christ enjoys the luxury of knowing that he died to save you - that he offered to do you all possible good, but that you rendered him hatred for his love?

From the nature of mind as we have it revealed to us in consciousness there is no remorse so unendurable as that which results from the conviction that we have "rewarded evil for good; and hatred for love." Anyone who has ever been thoroughly convicted of this sin, I have no doubt will agree with me. Anyone who has desired to be honest with himself and let his conscience speak has known something of what that bitterness is which results from the reflection of having rendered evil for good. Even in matters relating to this world, it is one of the most poignant sufferings which can be endured; for example when an individual remembers that he has injured one who has after all done him good and nothing but good - that he wronged those who have sought his welfare - how deeply that cuts! how invariably and unindurably it wounds the conscience! when they think - I have rendered evil for good, and hatred for love - from the very nature of the mind, as I have said, it is one of the bitterest agonies that can seize the mind.

Again. Sinners will carry their minds to hell, and if they die in their sins they can not fail to have this reflection. What a thought! Memory will there be perfect; here, as the body grows old from the very nature of the relations of the mind to it, memory fails, in fact it is one of the first faculties that begins to decay; but, when the body is thrown down, there is reason to believe that memory will be perfect. Circumstances often occur here to show how wonderful memory may be. I know a young man who was once near drowning, and he said it seemed to him that he remembered everything that he had ever done with perfect distinctness in a moment.

I have often seen that peculiar circumstances of strong excitement will so call up in the memory from the deep oblivion multitudes of things which have taken place and been long forgotten by the individual. Many remarkable illustrations of this have been recorded. It is no doubt true, therefore, that men are destined, from the nature of their minds, to remember and distinguish through every period of their existence every fact

of their history. From the nature of mind it is sometimes crippled by the infirmities of the body; and there is reason to believe, from many facts, that as soon as the body is thrown off from the mind - as soon as this encumbrance is got rid of - it will remember with the utmost precision every minute occurrence in their existence. No doubt this will prove a fearful addition to the future misery of the lost. God has not so constructed the mind of moral agents as to have facts pass forever from it. It is striking sometimes to see, when persons draw close to the verge of the grave, what an amazing power the memory has; there seems to be such a mighty resuscitation of their memory that their faculties seem to arouse themselves, and burst forth with an astonishing splendour and energy.

Perhaps some of you will recollect a case reported to have occurred in Germany some years back: a young woman who was accustomed to hear her master, a minister, read his Hebrew bible aloud in his study, while she was at work in the room adjoining. She could hear him read aloud to himself for his own gratification. Without understanding the meaning of the sounds she heard, or being able to divide one word from another, she became so familiarised with it, that when she became very sick, and was on the verge of death, she began to talk, as they supposed, in "the unknown tongue," but which turned out to be Hebrew, and the matter was passages of Scripture, which she repeated with the same intonations of voice her former master was accustomed to give them. She recited verse after verse verbatim, just as she had heard them read. This may serve to show how the mind of the moral agent hereafter awakes.

If this be so, when sinners come to reflect on the circumstances of their past history, over and over and over again - their ingratitude to Christ in return for his love, will look them steadfastly in the face, and they will be obliged to remember it. They will find it impossible to avoid doing so. What more will be needed to create eternal and unendurable torment than to be obliged to read over and over again the tablets of your memory - the horrible record of a protracted opposition to him who died to save you?

One moment's view of the fact of Christ's having deserved so well of you, and of the hatred you have rendered for his love, will fully reconcile the saints to the justice of your dreadful doom. They will have good reason to be reconciled even if their own children be punished, and those whom they loved best on earth. Can they rebel against Christ when he finds it impossible any longer to spare the sinner? No! They can not.

The conduct of sinners will appear to the universe to have been infinitely disgraceful. What would you think of a child who should treat his parent as you treat Christ? Would you not despise him, and reject him as an unsuitable associate? Would you have such a sinner for a companion? What then will be thought of you, sinner, in a future world when you come to be seen in your true colours?

Once more. The most blessed and honoured here will doubtless be despised most there. I mean the sinner who has had the greatest number of blessings here, and abused them, will be the most despised there. Sinners will not themselves admit that they render evil for good; the Jews of old assigned another reason for their opposition to Christ; they would not admit that they rendered hatred for his love; but, nevertheless, we all know that they did. Just so it is with sinners in these days; they will not admit it is Christ's goodness they oppose; but they know it is, and that they oppose him only because of his opposition to their sins, and because of his endeavours to do them good.

You know very well you are without excuse, sinner! And now the question is, will you continue to persecute Christ? Shall he ever have, from this hour, to say of you that you continue to render him evil for good, and hatred for his love? *What do you say, sinner?*

15. “NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

“Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God.” - Mark 12:34

These words occur in the following connection - “And one of the Scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, (that is Christ and the cavilling Jew) and perceiving that he answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments, is, Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength - this is the first commandment. And the second is like namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There are none other commandments greater than these. And the Scribe answered, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God, and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *his* neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God.”

The “Kingdom of God,” as the phrase is here used, does not mean the visible Church of God; for this man was at that time connected with the visible Church. Christ did not speak of the visible Kingdom of God; but of that invisible kingdom which is set up in the heart, and consists in Divine authority being established there. Christ said, on another occasion, “The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, lo here! or lo there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.”

This Scribe saw the great fact of the spirituality of the Divine law - that after all, religion consisted in that love to God which the law requires - and by his answer to the Saviour, Jesus saw that he had broken so far through the common prejudices of his nation, as to have overcome that darkness which supposed religion to consist in the mere formality of the ceremonial law. He understood that love was the great thing needed - the great thing in which all true religion consisted. Jesus saw, therefore, that nothing was wanting but faith, and the real building up of the heart. He was so near to the Kingdom of God - so instructed, as that a single act of the mind would bring him within it. He only had to yield his heart to what his intellect perceived - he only had to submit his heart to this - and by that one act he would be in the kingdom. He, therefore, said - “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.” In speaking to these words I propose -

- I. To show when it may be truly said, that a man is “far from the kingdom of God.”
- II. When it may be truly said a man is not “far from the kingdom of God.”
- III. The nearer men come to the kingdom of god, the more solemn is their responsibility - the more awfully critical is their crisis.

I. WHEN IT MAY BE TRULY SAID THAT A MAN IS “FAR FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

Please to keep in mind then, what is signified by the kingdom of God - it is that law which is the rule of his universal kingdom, set up in the heart of the subject -

established in full authority of the mind, yielding obedience to it. Through the heart in which this law is set up, the King controls the life of the subject.

When the mind is entirely engrossed with something else - when things connected with this Kingdom of God are not the subjects of thought and attention at all, a man is far enough from the Kingdom of God. This is the case with great numbers of persons; they have "no time" to look through into the real, spiritual virtue, of this kingdom and its laws; they give themselves up to business and pleasure, and think about everything else but what they ought to think about - it may well be said of such persons, that they are "far from the Kingdom of God." They have everything to learn yet.

Again, when persons are in worldly prosperity, full of worldly mindedness and ambitious projects, they are far enough from the Kingdom of God. Of course, their minds can not be said to be directed in that way at all. Some of you, perhaps, have so increased in your worldly affairs, that even on the Sabbath, worldliness often engrosses your thoughts - even on the Sabbath-day, the world has such a hold upon you, that you have more of worldly thoughts than of any other. Is this your case? Then you are far enough from the Kingdom of God. Some of you have such prospects of getting rich, and elevating yourselves and families, that you turn your backs on religion and all thoughts of Salvation. You, too, are far enough from the Kingdom of God, and perhaps likely to be.

But, again, when there are no reverses and changes to cross the path - when everything goes as you would have it, floating regardlessly along the tide of events, careless, prayerless - are you doing this? If so, far enough are you from the Kingdom of God.

Again, when persons are in great spiritual darkness and ignorance, and know but little about religion - when they have gross conceptions of it - of course, such persons are far enough from the Kingdom of God.

Again, when entrenched in error, giving themselves up to believe some lie, silencing the voice of conscience, cleaving to refuges of lies, they are far enough from the Kingdom of God. When the reins are given to the appetite, and pleasure is the great pursuit of men, running hither and thither, crying who will show us any good? How can we get pleasure, and enjoy ourselves in worldly things? That class of persons, of course, may be said to be far from the Kingdom of God.

Again, when filled with the prejudices of education, false ideas of religion, are men far from the kingdom of God. Who does not know, for example, how many false theories and doctrines of religion there are. Look at the Jews, how full they were of the prejudices of education. The Jews, in general, had not gone so far as this Scribe, by any means, inasmuch as he had come to see what the spirituality of the law really intended. Now, how many are there in this country, who think religion is made up of ordinances? As the Jews, they suppose religion to consist in certain ordinances - in submission to certain priests, prelates, baptisms, and purifications - mere ordinances. Who does not see how full the Catholic Church is of this? How much of this there is after all in those gross ideas of religion and those prejudices of education, which close the mind like a bolted door, against God. Thus it was with the Jews; they had so much to unlearn, as to place the mass of them in an attitude of hopeless resistance. As far as salvation was concerned, they were gone beyond the reach of those efforts which God could wisely

make to save them. It frequently happens that persons listen to some curious notions, and are so blinded by, and entrenched in them, that what they have learned will cost them probably more pains than they will ever take to rid themselves of them. Hold out the gospel to them - they have immediately some prejudices of education which strongly militate against its reception. They raise, perhaps, election, Divine Sovereignty, dependence on the Holy Spirit, or something else, which they call "orthodoxy;" they must "wait God's time" - "if they are elected they are sure to be saved," and all such stuff. Now to unlearn all that men have been taught of this kind, is oftentimes as hopeless, as for the Jews, or Roman Catholics, to unlearn all their prejudices and falsehoods. There is a sense, however, in which God is sovereign - in which, without the Holy Spirit, they can not be converted; so is the doctrine of election true; but they have perverted the true sense. Oh! how difficult it is for them to get into the Kingdom of God! Far enough are they from the Kingdom of God.

Again, let us say that persons are far from the Kingdom of God, when their prejudices lead them not to listen to sermons on the subject. They have clearly closed their ears, and will not allow themselves to be instructed, and warned of their responsibility. They will not hear even their own children, wives, or parents; surely it may be said of such persons as these, and, it may be, perhaps some of you belong to this category, are not far from the Kingdom of God. When they are so strongly entrenched in their position it is easy enough to see that such persons are far from the Kingdom - that it would be a wonder, almost, if they are saved. Many persons are troubled about many things - they give themselves so much care about the things of the world, as really to have no time to attend to their souls. Some are engrossed with politics, some in business speculations - some stumble at the conduct of professors of religion - others wait to see if the young converts "turn out well." They say, "We'll see. Wait." Many have done this till their feet have fallen. What were they doing? "O! Lord," they will say, "I was waiting to see whether those were really converted who profess to be; when, all at once, the foundation gave way - I fell! Yes! I was carried to the grave, and my spirit went weeping and wailing down the sides of the pit!"

Again, when persons are without interest, or where their interest is of such a kind, that it is a struggle against religion, they may be said to be far from the Kingdom of God. But I come not to the second part of the subject.

II. WHEN IT MAY BE SAID A MAN IS NOT "FAR FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD"

Many of you, perhaps, have been in this condition; some of you may even be so now. When the subject of religion has come to engage the attention of your mind, so far as to induce you to make up your mind to attend to it, and to do it now - when an individual has gone so far as to make this a present business - it may be said, in a very important sense, that he has taken an important step in his approach towards the Kingdom of God, although not an entrance into it. A step, it may be, infinitely important - as much so, perhaps, as his eternal salvation - is here taken; this will afterwards be seen.

Again, where a person has made up his mind to be honest with God, and with himself. This dishonesty on the part of men is a very great obstacle; they are unwilling to be honest - to ask God, honestly, "Lord, what wilt thou have me do." It is indeed a great

point gained, where an individual says, I will now just look the subject in the face like an honest man. I could tell you many cases of individuals - just in this position - they have made up their minds to attend at once to the subject; some also, have said, "I will now be honest with God." I could tell you many cases, indeed, many men in the United States have taken exactly this course, and soon, subsequently, been fully received into the Kingdom of God. When they have once made up their minds to be honest with God, it may truly be said they are not far from the Kingdom of God. After all, the question is, not what I have persuaded myself to believe, but what God says. Let us have truth whatever way it is. When a man comes into such a state as this, how easily men find truth! When they come to God for instruction, casting aside all their prejudices - when their errors give way, and men find themselves no longer stubborn and confident in them - when they find they can no longer maintain the position they hold - it may be said, they are not far from the Kingdom of God. This was the case with the Scribe here referred to; but whether he ever entered the Kingdom or not, has not been recorded. It was clear, however, that he had broken through the prejudices common to his nation, and had come to understand the real spiritual nature of the Kingdom of God.

But let me say again. When persons find the excuses by which they have been accustomed to soothe their consciences, begin to fail, it may be said they are not far from the Kingdom of God. No sinner intends *always* to neglect the gospel; but he has, as he thinks, some valid excuse for present delay. When men find themselves stripped of their excuses - when they see and feel that they have not any excuse, and come so far as not to be disposed to make excuses; it may be said they are not far from the Kingdom of God. I recollect that such a period arrived, in my own experience, and I had fought my way through darkness, error, mysticism; I had made many excuses, and settled one truth after another, intellectually, and did not, for a long time, fail to make excuses for delay. But at length, one after another gave way, till, finally, I very distinctly came into this position. I really could not get up any excuse; and feel very unhappy at my inability to see any further hiding-place - I had no excuse that I was not ashamed to make. Now, if any of you are in this attitude - if you see your excuses are really good for nothing - if you are ashamed to make them, and resolve to make them no more - it may be truly said you are not far from the Kingdom of God.

Whether you will ever enter, will appear by and bye; but you are certainly now not far from the Kingdom of God. If you really see all your evasions go for nothing, it is because the truth has found you out, and the Spirit of God has enlightened you. He had enlightened this Scribe.

Again, when business causes us so entirely to engross the mind, and religion is set in such a light, as that the business can not wholly engross the mind, and, in or out of business, you are pressed solely with the great question of Salvation. I recollect the time when I myself sat down to examine a point of law, and in spite of myself, I could not read the page half down before the subject of religion was so pressing upon me, that I could not get on - I could not possibly engross myself so wholly with my professional duties. I dismissed it again and again, but it came up as often as I dismissed it. When religion gets such a hold on the mind as this - that a man can not engross himself with his business, and feels that his business is but a trifle compared with eternal life - when this appears to the mind, that the business lasts but a few days,

and where am I? when the mind comes into such an attitude - when the Spirit of God presses the subject in this manner - you are not far from the Kingdom of God.

Again, when pleasure can no longer fully engross the mind - when pleasure seems no longer to be pleasure - when those things which have formerly so enchanted and fascinated the mind, lose their hold upon it - when the eternal realities present themselves to the mind - when the heart stands quivering under the lashes of conscience by day and by night, and the great truths of salvation are weighing upon the spirit - rely upon it that such an individual is not far from the Kingdom of God.

As I go over these points, inquire, each one of you of yourselves, "Is this, or was it ever my case?"

But, again, when conscience becomes so much awakened as that an individual can no longer comfortably go on in sin - can not go on it without great pain and agony, finding by experience, that a transgressor's heart is continually agonising within himself, filled with conviction and distress about sin - rest assured such a one is not far from the Kingdom of God.

Again, when spiritual darkness gives way, so that persons come to see their relations to God as a reality - when they come to understand the gospel and the way of salvation - when they see it developed distinctly, so that they can easily understand it, and see their need of a Saviour - in short, when the truths of religion come to be revealed to the mind, so that the mind really conceives them in their relations - such persons may be said to be not far from the Kingdom of God. This was the case with the Scribe, and has often been the case with persons in these days. Many of you, doubtless, remember the time in your history, when you saw with a clearness of vision you never had before - perhaps you are in this state now - when you saw your relations to these truths, the motives and necessities of the plan of Salvation, and its suitability to your wants - then the word is nigh unto thee, even in thy mouth; and if thou believest on Jesus Christ, thou shalt be saved. Who has dispelled the mists around you? The Holy Ghost has done it. You stand within one step - the single act of committing yourself in confidence to these truths, will bring you within the Kingdom of God.

Sometimes individuals are surrounded with special means - special efforts are made which take hold of the mind of an individual, a family, a congregation, or even a whole community, till large numbers may truly be said to be not far from the Kingdom of God.

But let me say again, especially when Christians have the spirit of prayer and pray for sinners - when Christians, in any family or congregation, receive the spirit of God in answer to prayer - when God is drawing very near to them through revivals - it may be said that all persons within the circle of such influences, are not far from the Kingdom of God. This will explain Christ's meaning, when he said, "Be ye sure of this - the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."

Again, when persons are "almost persuaded" to be Christians, they may be said to be not far from the Kingdom of God. We read of one in apostolic times, who said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." He was all but ready to yield. Perhaps some of you are in this condition; you have been here many times, and are almost

persuaded to yield: you are brought so near, as almost to enter the Kingdom of God. You can remember the time, many of you, if it be not now, or lately, you can well remember it - when the Spirit of God was working within you - when all your mind was in a state of quivering anxiety and intense agitation - when some death or other providence arrested your attention - you thought, and looked, and hesitated, almost making up your mind to submit. You came right upon the gate of this Kingdom; you could truly have said you were not far from the Kingdom of God.

Again, when the question comes to be balanced in the mind - Shall I now accept the Saviour? or shall I not? When the question is pressed for your acceptance - when you are told that now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation, and yet hesitate, looking at it - oh! how near you often are, perhaps within a hair's-breadth, so to speak, of deciding the question for life and for heaven! Oh, how near! Almost ready to commit yourself, you have seen and felt the necessity and suitability of the atonement of Christ - the blood ran through your veins - you could hear your own heart beat - your pulse was quickened - your very soul was on the tiptoe, so to speak, balancing the question; still you looked and hesitated; how near you were to the Kingdom of God.

This leads me to say, again, when persons are often placed in such circumstances, that the truths of the gospel spread before the mind - they are beginning to be pointed out clearly - an individual is often brought into such a position, that he must either say yes or no, and yes or no to the very question of life or death, of Christ or no Christ. It often comes right to this, that he not only sees his sins, the spirituality of God's law, the meaning of the gospel, its relations to him - he is crowded right up to this, and is only a hair's-breadth from the Kingdom of God. The Divine hand is beckoning him over the line, the Spirit strives, stretches out his hand and calls him - he fairly hops on the line. Oh, how near is such a one to the Kingdom of God! Why, methinks angels look on with wonder, as they see men sometimes standing upon the very line itself, fairly "slewing" over - all but in the Kingdom of God, and yet they don't give their hearts fully up! When we get to the solemn judgment I am expecting to learn that multitudes I have seen here during these many evenings, have been drawn into that attitude. Oh! where are you now? *where are you now?*

III. THE NEARER A MAN COMES TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD, THE MORE SOLEMN HIS RESPONSIBILITY - THE MORE AWFUL AND CRITICAL HIS CRISIS

The man to whom the words of our text were spoken had already made some advance upon the condition of the people generally; the law was lying revealed to him in all its spirituality - it was perceived in his intellect - it was as near as possible to his heart, so to speak. Now, the more persons are enlightened, in the sense here meant, the nearer they are. Christ did not mean to say, however, that he was any the *better*, for being thus near, if after all he never entered - he was not "almost a Christian" in the sense of "almost [as good as] a Christian." He saw what God's law in its spirituality required; and for it to take possession of his heart, would be the "Kingdom of God" within him. The more a person is enlightened, the greater his responsibility; this man, therefore, was all the worse, instead of better, for his nearness if he did not ultimately accept it. So it is with every sinner; the nearer they come, if they fail to enter it, the greater the

wickedness; the better you understand the truth, if you refuse to yield to it, the worse you are, and the more dreadful will be your final account. Of course the nearer persons come to the Kingdom of God, if they decide against it, the guilt of the wrong decision, under such circumstances, is not only greatly increased, but the consequences of it, at such a time, is vastly more likely to be fatal, than under any other circumstances. When persons are in darkness - engrossed with worldly things, they do not reject the truth in any such sense, or commit such a high crime; in short, they do not take such ground as to shut them up in their own impenitence, as they do when they see the truth clearly, and understand what they are doing, and then deliberately decide for the wrong. How fatal is their decision! See how deliberately they reject it!

Look at the case of Agrippa. He was "almost a Christian." Ah! almost! But was that all? - was that all? "I would to God," says Paul, "that thou wert not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these bonds." Felix - when Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come - Felix trembled, but said, "Go thy way for this time, and when I have more convenient season I will send for thee." There is much of this in the present day. How many of you do this? But, mark, when was the "convenient season?" Oh, sinner! inquire in hell, Is Felix there? Where's Agrippa? Is Agrippa here? And did these men hear the Apostle preach? "Yes." Did they hear him plead for the Kingdom of God, and was one "almost persuaded" and did the other tremble? But where are they now? Almost up to the Kingdom of God in time; but now as far from it as hell is from heaven.

REMARKS

It is no doubt a general truth, and from conversations with multitudes of men, in various parts of the world, I have been inclined to think it is a universal truth - that nearly all men, who listen at all to the gospel, are, at some time of their lives, really near to the Kingdom of God. Religion has come home to them at some time or other. I never found an individual who, when closely pressed on these subjects, did not acknowledge that he had, at some period of his history, been crowded quite close up to the Kingdom of God. It is remarkable to see how some providence - some striking circumstances in which they have been placed - some storm at sea; some danger on land; sickness, death - look back into your history, and you will discover that the question has, at some time, pressed you, and you have been balancing it in your minds, and you were very near to a proper decision.

But I remark again. When men are in this condition, Satan is remarkably watchful. The Bible represents him as being ever ready to take the word away as soon as it is sown in the heart. See Satan's subtlety in putting by the crisis, sliding the individual past, and keeping him in a state of carelessness. Sometimes after an impressive service, when on the very eve of deciding aright, he suggests, "Better wait till you get home," or some thought is suggested to your attention - some little squabble, or something comes into the mind and you turn away and look in another direction.

Now let me ask you, dying sinner, have you not, at sometime or other, been thus made the dupe of Satan, when none knew the workings of your mind but God and yourself? Perhaps it was in the dreary watches of the night when, unable to sleep, God made you wake up to a sense of your position; and, such was your agitation, that perspiration bathed your forehead, from the anxiety of your mind. Sin stared you in the face -

God's claims so pressed you that your nervous system quivered. Ah! how near you were! One single act-the act of committing your soul to Christ, would have put you within the Kingdom of God. But where are you now?

This leads me to say when persons are brought close along upon the verge of the Kingdom of God - of the peace and joy of believing in Christ - so close that they can look over - that there is nothing but a single step between them and laying hold on eternal life - how very near they are to the Kingdom of God! If you could take a map of your life, some of you would see that, at some period of it the Spirit had directed your crooked way along till - there! see your place on the map! You are on the very margin of the stream! Its waters are flowing at your very feet. One step is all that is between you and eternal life, which is holding out all its charms; but, alas! where are you now? Oh! where are you now? As you have gone back to be engrossed with business, cares, and pleasures - oh! what a lengthened way there now is between that point and your present position - what a way you are from these fair fields on whose borders, with your "almost persuasion" you then stood. You have not yet taken your reckoning to discover your position. It was once said of you, "that man is not far from the Kingdom of God."

Now, perhaps, long tracks of error and wrong-doing have come between you. You have gone on in disobedience, and scepticism, and sin - oh! sinner, hark! Do you hear that roar? What is that? "What is it?" Do you not know that you are nearing that tremendous precipice? - that you are reeling onwards to that mighty whirlpool? Hark! Rise up and flee; for death and hell are there! But, oh! your ears are deaf, your hearts are dull, and your eyes are dim!

Once more; God is leaving men entirely without excuse. Is it not true that if tonight the summons should be given - the great bell should be tolled - if tonight you were called to judgment you would be without excuse? There, who is that gone? Where is that man, and that woman? "Where *are* they?" They are gone to render account to the great God whom they have rejected. And is there any injustice - anything at all unreasonable in all this? No, indeed.

But, tonight, it is with those who have not wandered so far away that I am principally concerned - those who have been so near, and wandered on very far away I have less hope of - the momentous crisis is past. I will not say there is *no* hope for you; but this I say, it is with those who have not wholly passed that crisis that I have now to deal. The opposite party are very seldom, perhaps, aware of the thing which they have done. Perhaps his decision turned upon some mere trifle, as other great things often do; Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage; Adam and Eve fell into sin, dragging after them the whole of the race, through the merest trifle; and it often happens that persons break away from God, and run into sin for a very small matter.

Suppose Satan should tempt a man who is just on the borders of the Kingdom of God, to commit an enormous iniquity? Oh! No. Satan is wise enough not to do any such thing. He plies the man with something he considers a trifle - something he thinks he can do without doing himself or anybody else much harm - he tempts him to defer his decision till he reaches his home, or something of that kind, and it is this awful procrastination through which Satan prevails, and by which the deluded heart is separated and led away.

But, I say again, suppose it may truly be said that some of you who have not entered the Kingdom of God are well aware that some of these Sabbath evenings during which special services have been held, you have been brought into the state described, as not far from the Kingdom of God, if you never have before. A man once came to one of these Sabbath evening services who had previously been sceptical with regard to the necessity of his immediately attending to the salvation of his soul; he went up into the British School-room to the address to the Inquirers which is given after service; he confessed to a friend *present*, that he was then and there perfectly convinced of the necessity of at once giving up his sins; but, he said, he had a certain business transaction to take in hand the next week which he must do first; or else he could not do it at all. I was told of this before he left the room, and made for him through the crowd; but he slipped out before I got to him; I have never seen him since!

How is it with you, dying sinner, tonight? This is my last Sabbath with you. I may never meet you again till the solemn judgment when many of you may perhaps rise up and say, "Oh! Mr. Finney, under your ministry, at the Tabernacle, I was not far from the Kingdom of God; but I decided wrong!" Oh! did you decide wrong? How an angel might weep to hear you say so! "Ah!" you will say, "I wandered and wandered, and never came so near again; and now I have lost my soul!"

Oh! sinner, how shall it be with you tonight? Shall it be said again of any of you that you were not far from the Kingdom of God and yet you would not come into it?

Sinner, how is it? Oh! how is it? Will you decide tonight one way or the other? How is it? Oh! how will you decide tonight? How? *How?* HOW? If there is rejoicing in the presence of the Almighty over one sinner that repenteth, what quivering must there be over your present indecision! Oh! if those ministering angels who are waiting to carry the results of your decision to the Courts above, were permitted to break their silence, how they would cry out. Oh sinner, sinner, sinner - oh! decide aright, and have eternal life!

But oh! as they float about amongst you, with their invisible wings of love, to see how you will decide - watching you in your adjournment to the British School Room - beholding there the quivering of your mind as it trembles like the magnetic needle - and you wait - yes, you wait till you get home; but if the angels were permitted to give utterance they would cry aloud, "Oh! you are lost, *you are lost!* and the echo would fly to heaven! Oh, sinner, decide tonight - decide aright, and let it be told in the Courts above, that a wave of holy joy may sweep throughout those blissful regions!

It was reported of a man in this country, a person of great wealth, who devoted his time and talents to the cause of benevolence, and who was residing for a time in a place where there was a revival of religion, and nearly the whole of which was his property, that one evening the minister preached on the rejoicing there is in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, when this gentleman rose at the conclusion of the sermon, and said that he thought the time was come for him to decide. "Who," he asked, "dare now commit himself to God?" He then recapitulated very briefly the points of the discourse, and seemed to be lost in thought. "Who will do it?" said he, "shall I? Shall I? I will!" he exclaimed, "and let Gabriel tell it in heaven! *I will, and let Gabriel tell it in heaven!*" He then sat down; it was like a wave of light gleaming over the people. Since then everybody has known his position with regard to religion.

Dying sinner! - dare you now say, "I will, this night, accept Christ, and let it be written in heaven, and I will abide by it for ever?"

16. QUENCHING THE SPIRIT

“Quench not the Spirit.” - 1 Thessalonians 5:19

“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” - Ephesians 4:30

The Holy Spirit is the author of spiritual life itself - of all its heat and warmth in man - of all those states of mind that result from his influences. He is the author of all spiritual joy and peace in the soul; that is, his influences are exerted in creating that life and heat which belong to spiritual religion. He also employs himself in producing that joy and peace of mind which are peculiar to Christians. To “quench” him is to extinguish his light and heat - that peculiar light which he brings to the mind, and the heat which naturally results from it. The language is here figurative, of course; he is said to be like a refiner’s fire; to “quench” him, therefore, would be to put out that fire.

To “grieve” him is to destroy that spiritual peace of mind of which he is the author, in the human soul. When this is destroyed by anything we do, the Spirit of God is spoken of as being himself grieved - his agency is resisted and he is represented as being, therefore, grieved. There is a sense, undoubtedly, in which the Spirit of God himself is grieved: he is a moral agent. He can and does feel. There is a sense in which he is himself grieved. I have, however, another object mainly in view now. In speaking to the words of my text, I shall consider -

I. What is implied in the injunctions contained in these verses.

II. How the spirit may be grieved or quenched.

III. The fearful consequences of doing this.

I. THINGS IMPLIED

The injunction not to quench the Spirit clearly implies that it may be done, and that there is a probability of its being done; if it were an act impossible or improbable, we should not find such an injunction in Holy Writ. It implies not only a danger of its being done, but also that it is wicked to do so.

The Holy Spirit is represented in the Bible as being a moral agent. Feelings peculiar to a moral agent are ascribed to him. He is represented, too, as being infinitely interested in giving himself up to the great work of saving us from sin and death. Again: he is infinitely holy, and therefore opposed to iniquity in every form or degree. His influences are represented as teaching and enlightening, but not by a physical, irresistible agency, in the sense that he over-rules the freedom of the human mind; he enlightens, warns, and sanctifies through the truth; he operates by the presentation of such considerations as will most prevail with a moral agent. This must be the way in which he operates, for holiness to be the result of his operations. Holiness in substance, therefore, can not be created by any creative power. Holiness is love; his influence, therefore, must be truth, and prevails not by setting aside liberty, but by teaching how to use it aright, and by presenting such considerations as will induce men to do so. This is done, not by a physical, but a persuasive and enlightening agency.

II. HOW MAY THE SPIRIT BE QUENCHED OR GRIEVED?

The Spirit of God is grieved and quenched in all cases where the mind is unwilling to see the truth on any subject. Oftentimes individuals are unwilling to be convinced on certain points, and will not come up to the light. They avoid coming under the pressure of the truth on certain given points, and wherever this is done the Spirit of God is resisted, quenched, and grieved.

Again: the Spirit of God is grieved wherever the mind is so satisfied as to admit the truth, and yet unbelief prevails. There are multitudes of persons who confound conviction of the truth with faith, and do not know any better than to suppose that when convinced of the truth they have faith. Now there is not a greater error in existence. Being convinced of the truth of a statement is infinitely far from faith, which is the mind's voluntary act in view of what the Spirit of God convinces us of.

Unbelief is the rejection of what the Spirit presents to our minds, refusing to commit ourselves to it, take it home, and obey it. Now faith is that committal of the mind to the truth, when received, which God urges; it is this committal of the mind, in fact, that God does urge, in distinction from that which convicted sinners name. Convicted sinners are convinced of God's claims and character - of the necessity and sufficiency of the atonement of Christ, and many other things; yet he withholds because he is unwilling to yield up his sin, and to become a Christian implies the doing of this. But he will not do it, hence he will not receive Christ, take home the truth to his own mind, repose his all in and upon it. Where the truth is thus presented and yet resisted, there is unbelief, and wherever that prevails there the Spirit of God is grieved, resisted, and quenched.

The Spirit is grieved, resisted, and quenched by all evasions of the truth on questions of reform involving self-denial. There are a great many truths, the reception of which calls for great denial - a breaking off of certain things in which we have been in the habit of indulging ourselves. Suppose now a slaveholder, when the question of the moral character of his class comes up, and suppose that although he is wholly unacquainted with the arguments of his opponents and will not so much as read or even talk or listen to anyone upon the subject suppose also that when he does eventually read or hear a discussion of the question, still, after all, he will not yield to the truth which is presented - he resists the Spirit.

It is remarkable to see to what an extent this has been manifested in the United States. Then there is the trade in ardent spirits. Traders in these things deal with the question just as the slaveholders do - they selfishly maintain their position and will not give up the traffic. Well now, on any question of reform calling for self-denial, wherever the mind resists, is not candid in receiving and obeying the truth, the Spirit of God is quenched. There are a great many customs prevalent in society which the gospel utterly condemns and whenever these questions come up, and the mind will not receive the truth and make the necessary sacrifices, who does not see that this is quenching and grieving the Spirit who is trying to lead them away from all such practices?

Again: indulging in resentful or otherwise hostile feelings towards anyone is sure to quench and grieve the Spirit, especially wherein such feelings are persevered. Many

have known what it was to indulge in such feelings 'till at length, they have ceased to commune with their God.

Again: to indulge in a censorious spirit - finding fault, and putting a bad construction on everything, is another mode of transgressing the law laid down in our text. Sometimes you will see an individual who puts a bad construction on things which admit of a good construction, making out that certain individuals have wrong motives, bad dispositions; they do this where the motives may be good for what they know. Now all such conduct as this no doubt grieves and quenches the Spirit of God.

But I remark again: any unnecessary, unbenevolent unbrotherly publication of the real failings of individuals is another way in which this sin may be committed. Persons may commit this crime by telling the truth unnecessarily, and thus finally injuring the person. You have no right to speak even of the faults of others unnecessarily; nor will you do so if you are as careful of his, as you wish him to be of yours - "Love your neighbours as yourselves." If this were the case, how careful would you be of your neighbours. Wherever this is not the case - wherever the tale-bearer is listened to - wherever you treat your brother or neighbour in a manner different from that in which you desire to be treated yourself - there, undoubtedly, the Spirit of God is grieved. Never do or withhold that which you would not like done to or withheld from yourself.

Again: This sin is committed where persons make self-justifying, God-condemning excuses for their sins. Thus some grope on in darkness, error, and distress of mind from year to year, because, instead of taking the blame of sin to themselves, they make excuses which virtually throw it upon God. This is grieving the Spirit. Every selfish person - everyone who is set upon the promotion of his own interests instead of the promotion of God's glory grieves the Spirit of God. Such an act is a virtual apostasy from God. They have professedly committed themselves to God, and have no right to do anything but for him. A man can never enjoy communion with God while in pursuit of any selfish ends - while he seeks things merely for his own pleasure, and not for God. If you do this you virtually take back your consecration to God, and devote yourself to your own interests. It matters not at all in what manner you may excuse yourselves for so doing; you have no excuse; and especially is this the case where light has been poured upon the subject. Now, who can suppose that in those days, such a man as John Newton could, even for a time, continue in the slave-trade without some compunctions of conscience? But suppose he should have no recourse to the Bible, and ask, "Were there not slaves in the days of the New Testament?" Why did not Christ denounce it? Slavery was known to the Apostles, Why did not they denounce it, if it were so wicked?

This is easily enough answered. But suppose men justify the slave-trade in this way? And in the Southern States of America this very common. They forget that Christ had a previous question to settle before he could make any direct attack on the several sorts of sin. When Christ came into the world, instead of his mission being acknowledged, he had to debate every inch of ground. His divinity and divine mission demanded primary attention; it was necessary that the world should first recognise his *authority* to lay down regulations, and prohibit practices. It would have been utterly out of place for him to have attempted to set right social questions before he had established his authority to interfere with such matters. Again: it is said the Apostles

did not denounce slavery. They too had a great question which demanded their first attention. They had to establish the fact of Christ's resurrection, divinity, and Messiahship, as well as the divine authority of their own commission. This being done, they would naturally commend to the world the Scriptures of truth, and let them tell what things are right and what is wrong. Now, who does not see that it is a selfish evasion for a slaveholder to talk thus? It would have been absurd for him to have denounced any particular sins without establishing his authority to denounce sin at all.

Suppose a man in this country should attempt thus to justify slavery; you would not go with him. When light is poured upon this question, it becomes a heinous offense, and no man can pursue it without forfeiting his right to be called or treated as a Christian. I can recollect the time when we all thought the use of ardent spirits was necessary - we all thought no one could do without them; but by and by, the question was taken up. Many resisted. It was the rising or falling of many in Israel. Many rose up in resistance, and sin quenched the Holy Ghost - and where are they? A desolation has come over some of their churches through taking wrong grounds on this question.

But let me say again: if any person allows himself to pursue any branch of business which is a great evil to society, he is guilty of the sin here spoken of. Suppose he prides himself on his intention to make a good use of his money; suppose a pirate were to plead that he was going to give his money to the Bible Society, would that mitigate his crime? No indeed. There was a rich man in my country, who professed to be converted, made up his mind as he said at the time, to give up all that he had to the Lord. I saw nothing of him for a time, but after some years he called at our house, and we had some conversation. I found he had left his former place of residence, and was removing to another part of the country. I asked him where he was going to, and he replied that he "was going West, in fact, he was going to St. Louis. He had failed in business." "Failed in business?" I exclaimed, "How is that?" It turned out that he had been speculating in the provision line in order, as he said, to get money to send out evangelists. In order to do this, he bought up all the provisions along a certain road, put a high price upon them, and thus raised money from the poor along this great thoroughfare. He had, according to his notions, been speculating for God. I asked him what business he had doing such a thing as that; and informed him that I was not the least surprised that he had failed. Did God want him to *punish the poor* in order that he might *spread the gospel*? No, indeed.

Again, there is the *liquor trade*. There are many persons who will resist light on this subject, and talk just as men who are determined not to forsake a business which they know is an abomination to the world and a curse to society. Yes! If all the tears could be collected together which this business has caused to be shed, they would make enough, perhaps, for them to swim in. It has broken hearts, ruined families, dethroned reason, desolated firesides - everything is laid waste. All this, and more than this, has resulted from the sale of these deadly drinks. some say it is *necessary*. For the sake of argument I will admit this, in certain instances; but mark, is it not a fact assumed and believed that it will be abused? - that vastly more will be abused than is really needed? - and is not the traffic, therefore, undesirable at all? Suppose no more were used than the comparatively small quantity which is actually necessary - suppose it were not abused, and that there was no probability that it would be abused, how many liquor dealers, think you, would there be in London? How many of them would think of living by the

business if they presumed no more than is necessary would be used? Now it is the assumption that it will be abused that renders it so desirable an object of traffic. Every man engaged in it presumes this, or he would not do so. Who, then, can pursue such a trade as this, and enjoy communion with the Holy Ghost at the same time?

Time was when good men used it because they thought they needed it; but now the frightful extent of its awful ruin has been shown. Drinking, and slavery, and everything of the kind might go on, without its wickedness being dreamt of; but when light is poured upon the subject, and men still refuse to see, it is utterly inexcusable.

It is a remarkable fact, that those who have resisted this reformation - ministers who have refused to yield after they have been shown the sinfulness of their position - it is astonishing to see how they have withered; this has been particularly manifest in my country amongst those who have continued to truckle to the slave power, after seeing the sinfulness of the traffic. The frown of God has been upon them as manifestly as it could be; they have quenched the Spirit. It would be impossible to calculate the good which has been effected where holy men of God in the ministry have taken the lead in these reforms.

There are multitudes of things in business - modes of doing business - by which the Spirit of God is grieved for instance, when the error is seen, and yet the will is allowed to struggle with the Spirit of God. Many men are uneasy and restless from resistance to the Spirit of God in such matters; there is some want of candour, and consequently there is a fetter upon their spirit - there is a strife, an agonising in their soul - they know there is something wrong - they have not the joy and peace belonging to a Christian; the fact is, they are engaged in a struggle with their Maker - quenching and grieving his Spirit in the presentation of the truth on some question which has come before them. Liquor dealers, and all who use those drinks, are in danger of falling into this state.

I would not apply my remarks so generally in this country as in America, because public opinion is not so far advanced here as it is there; I would not, therefore, assert that none of you who use these drinks enjoy communion with God. Even Newton, Whitfield, and the Countess of Huntingdon were slaveholders; but were they now alive would they be slaveholders? No, indeed! God is on the way to reform mankind on these points; that state of the world is coming right square up to them. God is turning the attention both of the church and the world to these great evils. Light is blazing forth on every hand and now will anyone pretend to say that Whitfield, or Lady Huntingdon, would be slaveholders if they were alive now?

Now, who does not see that it is the duty of every Christian in the world to take up whatever self-denial these reforms may involve? I have known multitudes of men who have turned their liquors into the street; and who, when urged to dispose of it for chemical purposes, have replied - "No, we will touch not, taste not, handle not the unclean thing."

When the evils resulting are so great, and there is no mode of counteracting them but by taking off their hands - let me say that all jealousy, envyings, and party feeling, are so many ways of quenching and grieving the Spirit of God. I have seen the piety of churches decline rapidly and fearfully from this cause in great cities, and yet they could

not make it out; whereas if you question them individually, you will find numbers of them in such an attitude towards one another, that the Holy Spirit, who loves them both, must, in some measure, withdraw his influence.

Who, in this age of the world, thinks to preach against gluttony? Yet it is one of the commonest forms of sin. An individual once confessed to me that he had for years been unable to attend properly to his business in consequence of indulging in too hearty a dinner; but that during the whole of that time he had never once heard gluttony preached against, or condemned from the pulpit as sinful. Now I suppose it may perhaps be different in this country; but I think that a great deal needs everywhere to be done, whatever may already have been said, even to Christian people, in the subject of excessive eating.

The same may be said of drinking and other evil indulgences, such as the use of tobacco in its various forms. How few like to look at this in the proper light. They surely can not plead that they smoke, snuff, or chew to the glory of God. In some few diseases, somewhere about one in five thousand, tobacco may be used with benefit. If professors of religion allow themselves in such self-indulgent habits, how can they expect to enjoy communion with God? Is it not unreasonable to persons to use such articles, wasting God's money for them, and rendering themselves even odious? I was astonished the other day to fall in with a minister, whose hands, and the entrances to whose pockets, were considerably besmeared with snuff. He talked of religion as if he never thought of this; but most men know that all such habits are contrary to the duty of the Christian. I have known some who when told that such were wrong, would get up and leave the house - they were unwilling to be shown the real nature and tendency of these things, but if they are unwilling at least to ascertain by honest investigation, whether such things are right or wrong, they must assuredly quench the Spirit. There is no way in which we can keep a clear medium open between our hearts and God without weighing all our habits in the balances of the Bible. If we would have the fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, and so on, we must ever be wide awake to listen to reproof, and honestly apply every principle of the gospel to all our life, and to everything we do.

I used tobacco once myself, even for sometime after I was converted. A brother conversed with me on the subject. I had supposed it beneficial to me for certain reason. "Brother," he said to me, "do you think now that it is right?" I reflected for a moment. He made a suggestion or two on the subject. At length, I put my hand into my pocket, and got out my box, which I had just filled. "There," said I, "take that." I saw him some years after, but I had not resumed the use of it, and have never felt inclined to do so since. I do not speak boastingly, but I have become quite afraid of doing anything which would tend to quench the Spirit. I have always tried to do this; if aught gets between my soul and God, I have been in the habit of saying, "O Lord, tell me what is the matter! What am I doing? What stands in the way?" We should act in such a way as if Jesus saw and was with us, just as he saw and was with the disciples. Let that be the rule. Let no man do or say anything of what Jesus might say. "I am sorry to see you doing or omitting to do so and so - engaged in such and such a business." Let your proceedings be of such a nature that you can say, "O Lord, art thou sorry to see me do this? Does it grieve thee? Does thine heart approve of my doing it?"

Now, do you for one moment suppose that a slaveholder, for instance, could do this, and go away supposing that God would have him continue his atrocious traffic? And do you believe that men engaged in business of other kinds, which are injurious to society - the liquor trade, for instance - can go and say, "Lord, is this for thy glory? Wilt thou approve, and add thy blessing?" Can they say, "Help me, O Lord, to sell as much liquor today as I can - to throw out as much alcohol in all the forms in which I can get people to buy it?" Can they pray so? No man has any right to engage in any business on which he can not ask the blessing of God. Who would think, in these days, of going to pray in that way? Who would think of going to pray that multitudes of evils which now exist may be put away, while they themselves are among the very persons who do these things.

Now, brethren and sisters, you who are, so many of you, strangers to me, that I do not know if there be anyone in this house who is actually guilty of this, but if there be, I wish to warn such a one in love. I ask you, are you doing these things with the idea that you are honouring God? Can you say when you go to your liquor shops, "O God, bless me in this business, help me to do a deal of business, and thereby glorify thee?"

But let me say again: Refusing to receive a brother who calls for self-denial is grieving and quenching the Holy Ghost, refusing to sympathise with Christ in his self-denying exertions to do good to the world. He has led the way by showing what he is willing to do to save mankind. Now those who hold back, unwilling to unite with him upon the same principles on which he acted, resist and grieve the Spirit.

Not long since an individual was talking to his pastor about the propriety of setting an example to his flock by abstaining himself if only for the sake of others. But he said, "Their abuse of it was no reason for his abstinence. They abused many other things as well as that." Now, was this the principle on which Paul acted? No indeed, he was ready to give up meat "as long as the world lasted." On the same principle Christ might have said he did not see why he should suffer because mankind had abused the government of the Almighty in making a bad use of their moral agency. Christ acted upon the principle of saving those who had no excuse for their sins - not the unfortunate, but the wicked. Thus it is that missionaries and other Christians deny themselves so that when the good to them is less than the evil to others, they instantly come out and forego their own good because it is so much less than the evil which might result to others. But when we take such astounding ground as in the case of the said minister, what can we expect but darkness of mind and fruitlessness of life? In order to have the Spirit of God, we must yield to him, and if we do not do this - if we do not go from one degree of self-denial to another - we resist the Spirit who is trying to lead us up to a higher ground than we have hitherto occupied. The church has never been on a ground so high as to give herself entirely up to reform the world; but he is pressing her up and up. Her business, therefore, is to prepare herself to go the whole length of reforming herself, and those around her, and prepare for any degree of self-denial that may be required in order to accomplish this. But if anyone shall insist upon not giving up this and that, although he knows that the good to be obtained, and the evil to be shunned will far outweigh all that can be gained from indulgence - what would become of the church and the world should they imitate him?

Suppose, for instance, we admit that alcoholic drinks are, in some cases, useful? Who believes that the use of them is so great a good as the evil of their abuse? The same can not be said of meat and drink seeing that they are necessities of life, and can not be done without. Things indispensable to life can not be done without - we are not called upon, therefore, under any circumstances, to give them up. But there are drinks and other things which are working a great injury to society, and which it has been demonstrated again and again, may safely be dispensed with - all will admit that the injury which results to mankind bears no comparison to the doubtful benefit which is said to be derived by us individually - it is clear, therefore, that we ought to give them up. What was the principle on which Christ acted? Why, he said, because of my relation and character, it is better that there should be this suffering on my part, than that the human family should suffer eternal death!

If the suffering he endured had been greater than that which he prevented, the course he adopted would have been neither wise nor benevolent. He gained for the universe an unspeakable benefit, and prevented an inconceivable injury. His rule should be our guide. Self-denial does us good. *Shall we offer the Lord only that which costs us nothing?* Shall we say that while a thing is a good to us we can not give it up? Why not? If your so doing will avoid a greater evil, and procure a greater good, you are bound to give it up, if you are bound to be benevolent at all. If you will not sacrifice a small good to yourself for the sake of a great good to others, what kind of a Christian must you be? You go in direct opposition to the Spirit of Christ and of the Apostles. Now if a man speculates about his indulgences - if he “does not see why he should give up” this or that, and the other thing - who can expect him to have a face so clear as to look up to God and say, “Thou knowest, O Lord, that I would rather die than scatter evils thus around me by anything I should do!” The fact is, beloved, there is a world to be said on this subject. Now who does not see that shuffling and conniving like this is grieving the Spirit?

Some of you are aware of the great and powerful revivals which swept through America, and that when the slavery question came up, the ministers of the North and South were united in one great ecclesiastical connection; they cried out in many quarters, that we should not disturb this connection. The North poured down the truth upon the South, and even the Northern ministers sometimes would not allow notices of anti-slavery meetings to be announced from their pulpits - not even anti-slavery prayer-meetings - but treated the matter just as many ministers in this country do the temperance question. Neither would they speak out and denounce the sin of slavery. The result was, the blight of the Almighty came upon the churches, revivals disappeared, the churches were grieved, the Spirit was grieved! The very same course was pursued over there with regard to temperance; and here let me say, if I am not mistaken, you have got some solemn lessons to learn on this subject in England. I would that all the ministers of England were here tonight! But some of them will not hear us on the subject; they are unwilling to broach it, or to name it broached by the churches! What will become of them and their churches? We shall see! If their churches must be shut to these subjects - if this question is to be resisted - mark me! if you do not experience a similar suffering to that which afflicted the American churches. There are many doleful tales to tell on that subject. But these things must be put away; the chains of the slaves must be snapped asunder; intemperance must be

swept away; God will have it so. The cars are coming! The train approaches! Off the track! Off the track!

Let no man trifle with God on these subjects. These great evils must be rolled off from the face of society. The poor must no longer be countenanced in running to the tippling houses; they must be reasoned with, and retreated. Consider! You do not need it. You are better without it. Do not go!

I wish I had time to tell you some affecting instances of Christians going to the ditch, taking the drunken men out, treating them kindly - giving the whole force of the influence and example against these drinks. How many tears have thus been wiped away! How many hearths have thus been surrounded with joyous smiles where desolation once prevailed? There is much to be done; do not resist these movements. Do not stand in the way lest you grieve the Spirit of God. I would not, however, deal in indiscriminate condemnation. Time was when there was as much darkness in America on this subject as there is here. I would say to all, "Be willing to practice what you know, and remain open to further conviction." Go for the whole. Say, "I will wash my hands in innocence, then will I compass thine altars, O Lord." I had much more to say on this head, did time permit; but I must now just notice some of the consequences.

III. THE FEARFUL CONSEQUENCES OF DOING THIS

First, Great blindness of mind. You are probably aware that such has been the blindness of some men, that they have undertaken from the Bible to prove that slavery is a Divine institution, so benighted have they become! You do not need, in England, to be told that this is gross darkness; and it began in their shutting their eyes to the truth, which begat a coldness of mind and hardness of heart; their whole being was brought under dominion of their lusts; they were chained and bound fast in the fetters of their sin; they are waxing worse and worse - becoming more and more confirmed in sins which I have not time to particularise.

You can all, from the rapid outline I have presented, that instead of at once getting a universal reformation - all classes denying themselves, setting an example, and the church taking the lead, what are they doing? They are falling back - shrinking from their work. There is great wreck of ministerial character, oftentimes, where there is not a thorough walk right up to the work. There can not be much prevailing prayer where there is so much quenching the Spirit, so few of the fruits of the Spirit, these self-indulgent habits and God-dishonouring practices.

You can see from the remarks I have made that many of you are tempting God by praying for the Spirit while, at the same time, you are quenching. There is great danger of the Spirit leaving you. Some years back a minister about forty years of age came to me after service and said, "Brother Finney, I am in a terrible state of mind. I must abandon the ministry. When at the Theological Seminary, I took the wrong side in a discussion; but having committed myself, I here defended my position contrary to my convictions. I then soon lost the spirit of prayer, and was almost afraid to enter the ministry. The curse of God has been on me ever since. I have been many years in the ministry, yet I do not know that I have been instrumental in the conversion of a single soul. What shall I do? My fruitless vine is dry and withered!"

He told me many more things of a similar character; but the case was not new to me. I have seen instances of individuals having taken the wrong side, and of God holding them up as a warning to others, lest they fall under the same condemnation.

And now, let me ask you, Are you prepared to go the full length of doing what you think Christ, should you meet him, would ask you to do? If you are not prepared to do this, you are resisting the Spirit - you are quenching the Holy Ghost. Are you holding back? What are you doing? Will you live at this "poor, dying rate," or be filled with the Spirit? If so, do not quench the Spirit; resist and grieve him no longer; but give up all your life, heart, and soul, relying upon him; the fruits of the Spirit will abound in you, and if you do this, those around you will take knowledge of you, if indeed you exhibit the fruits of the Spirit of Christ.

17. LITTLE SINS

“Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” - James 2:10

The New Testament is the spirit of the Old revealed. From the state of mankind, and, therefore, from the necessity of the case, God began to deal with men, in his first revelation to them, respecting their outward demeanour, and gradually gave them a more spiritual revelation as they were able to bear it. For example, the New Testament reveals the spiritual meaning of both the moral and ceremonial law, it opens up the full meaning of the types and shadows which were designed, under the old Testament dispensation to teach great truths in relation to religion, but their meaning, and real intention, were lost sight of by a great portion of the Jewish nation, who came to regard them simply in the letter; the New Testament was therefore designed to reveal the deep spirit and meaning of them. When Christ came the veil was put away; we no longer have the letter but the spirit. Jesus and his apostles made it their business to expound the meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures. Christ often expounded the law to show what was the true spirit and meaning of it, resolving it all into two great branches - “thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself.” Duties to God and duties to man. Christ thus taught us that the motive, the state of the heart, the intention with which every thing is done constitutes it either sin or holiness. You will find that the New Testament writers, and Christ himself especially, when speaking of the outward conduct of man traces it right back to the heart; and they taught that if any action proceeded from love to God and our neighbour, it was right and good; but if not it was wicked, whatever the outward form of it might be. Now, I say, Christ first and his apostles, and all the inspired teachers of Christianity afterwards made it a prime object of their teaching to show what was the real spirit of the law at all times: they taught that love was the fulfilling of the law; that all law - meaning the law of the Old Testament, was fulfilled in one word - love; and, therefore, whatever action was not from love was sin. It is of very great importance that we should keep our eyes on this fact, for we can not properly understand either the Old or the New Testament, unless we understand the method of God’s dealings with men, that he adapted his instructions to their necessities, training them from infancy to manhood, gradually developing his instructions as they were able to receive them. In the Old Testament he gave men all the instruction in a particular form which was necessary for them at the time; and then in the New the veil was taken away from the Old. Those who were pious under the Old Testament dispensation, were justified by faith, and saved even as those under the New, but the best of them knew but comparatively little of spiritual religion. Jesus Christ himself said of John the Baptist, that he was greater than all those who had come before him, but he also said, that the least in the kingdom of God was greater than he. That is to say, the least under the New Testament dispensation was greater than the greatest under the Old.

In speaking from the words that I have read, I propose to pursue the following order -

I. What is not intended by the assertion of the text.

II. What is intended.

III. Shall show that this is plainly the doctrine of reason as well as revelation.

I. WHAT IS NOT INTENDED BY THE ASSERTION IN THE TEXT

Observed, the affirmation is this - "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Now I remark, first, that he did not intend to say that any man might obey the spirit of one precept and at the same time disobey the spirit of another precept: to interpret it thus would be to make the text speak directly the opposite of what it does say. The text does not say that you can truly keep all the precepts but one, for this is the very thing which the Apostle takes pains to deny; if we understand him to mean that, then we understand him to assert a palpable contradiction. He says, if a man offends in one point he is guilty of breaking the whole law - then of course he meant to deny that a man can keep the law in some particulars and break it in others at the same time.

II. WHAT THEN IS INTENDED

Why he plainly means this - and it is perfect accordance with the spirit of the whole of the New Testament - that if the letter of every precept but one, is obeyed, while the spirit of that one is knowingly violated, the whole law is broken - if in any one particular he knowingly, sins he violates the whole law. I will explain the reason for this by and by - I am now explaining the meaning. I say, then, that the violation of one law is the violation of all law. That is when the spirit of a precept is violated, there can be no real true obedience of any other precept.

III. WHETHER THIS DOCTRINE IS SANCTIONED BY HUMAN INTELLIGENCE AS WELL AS REVELATION

Observe, this doctrine was but very little understood under the Old Testament dispensation, for reasons that I have already mentioned. They were taken up with the *letter* of the law, and, therefore, were not disposed to trace back their actions to the heart - and to understand that all outward actions were the result of the state of the heart. Now the New Testament was designed to correct this great and almost universal error.

In showing you that this is the doctrine, and the only doctrine of human reason, such as human beings can acknowledge, I observe first; the letter of the law refers to outward acts; it says thou shalt do so and so, and thou shalt *not* do so and so; it requires certain things to be done, and certain things to be omitted - this is the letter of the law. In the ten commandments you have an illustration of what I mean. Now observe, the Jews, as a nation, did not consider that these outward actions had no moral character only as they proceeded from certain states of mind - consequently when they had fulfilled the letter of the law they thought that they had kept the law. If they did not commit adultery in the outward act, they thought they had kept the law; if they did not kill, or bear false witness, they thought themselves free from all the condemnation and penalties which were attached to the violation of these commands. But Christ said, if a man should so much as look upon a woman to lust after her, he had already committed adultery with her in his heart; and in the same way he took up every one of the precepts of the moral law, and every precept of religion to be found in the Old Testament, and resolved it all back into the state of the heart in which everything was

done. This, to be sure, was a most terrible blow to the hopes of the self-righteous, to those who had a great regard for their own doings, but he saw that this was needed.

Let me say again: the spirit of the law always respects the motive from which an action springs. It is so in all criminal courts in every country. The letter of the law says thou shalt not do this or that, and yet in trying a case of crime the judge and jury always try to get at the motive which prompted the action. Suppose, for example, they found that an individual did anything outwardly, but that he was insane when he did it, they would say that his deed was not a crime. To be sure, courts of law are obliged, in general, to take the outward act as indicative of malicious intention; but if it can be proved that there was no such malicious intention - that the motive was not to do harm, but to do good - the action would not be treated as a crime. Courts of Law and Equity always seek to ascertain the motive from which a thing is done, and if it can be arrived at the doctrine of reason is always supplied to the case - the spirit of the law, therefore, in all cases respects the motive from which any action proceeds.

In the next place; the moral law, or the law of God, requires supreme love to God, and equal love to man. The whole of the law is summed up in these two requirements - love to God and love to man. And this love must not be a mere emotion: the whole being must be devoted to the end to which God is devote: it must be a voluntary devotion to God because of the end which he seeks. In other words - it is good-will within; it is the mind in a voluntary state yielding itself up, not to self-interest, but the glory of God, and the good of all beings.

Let me say again: it is easy to see that the state of mind which will supremely devote itself to one great end, can not at the same time give itself up for the promotion of a different end: his mind can not be devoted to one end and all his outward conduct tend in a directly opposite course; the very fact that he is devoted to an end will regulate his being, and be the mainspring of all his outward actions. If a man's mind is devoted to God, his outward actions will be an illustration of his thoughts: his heart is full of love to God, and he is set upon realising the end at which God aims; and, therefore, all his outward actions will be a succession of endeavours to realise that end. Selfishness, in all sinners, is the end at which they aim; and their outward life is nothing more than a perpetual succession of efforts to gratify themselves; hence it is easy to see that all their actions will have one great end in view - the promotion of their own interests. This, I say, everybody knows, that knows anything about mind and its actions.

But let me say once more: when there is supreme love to God, and equal love to our fellow-men - that is where we love them as we love ourselves - we can not consent in any way to wrong God or our neighbours. Suppose now, that a man loves God supremely, is supremely devoted to his interests, it is impossible that he could sin knowingly, and do that which is inconsistent with God's interests. His whole life is an endeavour to secure that upon which his heart is set. Suppose then that his heart is set upon pleasing and glorifying God, can he consent to sin in such a state of mind, and thus dishonour, displease, and set at naught the authority of God? It is a contradiction and an absurdity to say that he can. This is the doctrine of the law as well as the gospel, for the gospel does not in any case set aside the law. So far is it from being true that the gospel has set aside the law, that it is only a condensation of the requirements of the law, and it contains the whole substance and the very essence of the law doubly

sanctioned and enforced. Hence it is said, "If he that despised Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing!:" Again: if a man loved his neighbour as himself, it is impossible that he should consent to wrong his neighbour, but on the other hand, he will seek his neighbour's interests equally with his own.

Then let me say in the next place; obedience to God implies a supreme regard to God's authority. Now every one can see that every known sin is a rejection of his authority. For example. Suppose an individual does anything whatever from a supreme regard to God's authority, he can not act in any other thing in a way quite inconsistent with that authority. Suppose he does any one thing from a supreme regard for the authority and interests of God, he can not, while in that state of mind do something, in the accomplishment of which he must reject the authority of God and trample it down. The thing is preposterous, as every man perceives. A man can not act without regard to the authority of God in one thing, and yet at the same time act from supreme authority to him in another thing.

But let me say again: it is easy to see that a man can not pick and choose among the commandments of God, and obey some and disobey others. Supreme love to God is an exercise of the mind, and a man can not have this and yet act the opposite - it is a palpable contradiction: a man with supreme love to God in his mind can not consent to violate any commandment of God.

This leads me to remark again; that the true spirit and meaning of what the apostle says, is as obviously and strongly asserted by reason as it is by revelation. What the apostle asserts is this - if a man should do any or all of the things required in the decalogue, or ten commandments, in the letter, and yet should violate the true Spirit of one law, he would prove that he did not keep any of them from a right motive - that he did not really obey the law at all in its true spirit and meaning. If I should keep those which did not cost me much self-denial, or keep them in the letter, but violate them in the spirit, this would prove that none of them were kept from a right motive. Hence, if any one indulges in the commission of any one sin, and yet appears in everything else to be virtuous, you may know that he has not true religion in his heart, that he is only religious in appearance. From what the apostle says in this passage it is plain, that if men pretend to have faith, and pretend to have love, and yet do not obey God, that they are deceiving themselves, and are violating the spirit of the whole of God's law. You can thus see, my dear hearers, that if the heart is right the conduct must be, and if the heart is wrong the conduct is wrong, whatever it may appear outwardly. The conduct is sinful, because it does not proceed from right intention. If the law of God is not obeyed in the spirit of it, it is disobeyed, whatever the outward life may be. If there is no reverence for the authority of God, no supreme devotedness to God, and not equal love for our neighbours, the law is violated. This leads me to say again - if the spirit of the law is violated - for the spirit of the law is the spirit of the gospel, and the spirit of the gospel is the spirit of the law - and both are the spirit of heaven; both are the spirit of God, and both are found in heaven; therefore, whatsoever falls short of obeying the spirit of the law, also falls short of obedience to the gospel.

Some remarks must close what I have to say this morning. First: viewed in relation to God's government of men there are no little sins. A great many persons have wondered, in reading the Old Testament, why certain sins were punished with death, which in the present day are hardly regarded as sins at all. The penalties for breaking the law under Moses were very different to what they are now in governments generally. The fact is, that under that dispensation it was peculiarly necessary for the infliction of a severe penalty against sin; and there were peculiar reasons why the law of the Sabbath should have been so rigidly enforced upon the Jews. But if you reflect for a moment you will see that there are no little sins, because every sin is a rejection of God's authority: every sin is a renunciation, for the time being, of allegiance to the Divine government. Of course there can be no little sins, for every sin involves a breach of the whole law, in the spirit of it; every one of them involves a refusal to love God with all the heart, and our neighbours as ourselves; every one of them involves a setting up of our own interests above that of Jehovah. There are no little sins then under the government of God; for everyone one of them involves rebellion against his authority. When we come to look at human society, and judge of the actions of men only as they effect it, we get comparative ideas of sin; but when we come to look at sin as a violation of the law of God, then we can see that every one who commits sin, in any degree as judged by human society, is an open enemy of God.

But let me say once more: when we truly understand this subject we shall see that when God's government is regarded, those sins which people are apt to call little sins, are really the greatest. That is, they involve the most guilt when viewed in their relations to God. When people practice little forms of self-indulgence, little lies, little acts of unjust dealing, of course the temptation is small, and the smaller the temptation if complied with, the greater the sin. Suppose, for example, an individual, the force of temptation, should commit some horrible crime against society, which is bad enough to be sure; but suppose another man, under very slight temptation consents to cast off God's authority in something else! Not it is true that in the former case the man consented to cast off God's authority too, and the crime consists in sinning against God's authority; the crime does not consist in sinning against human law, and human society. observe, then, in both instances, the sin is against God. The one is called a crime, but the other is not generally regarded as such, and yet both as crimes against God are equally wicked, or it may be, as I have said, that that which is not regarded as a crime by man, may be the greatest sin against God, because it was committed under very slight temptation. You are passing along the street, and you see a woman with a basket of oranges, her head is turned, you pop your hand into her basket, and slip an orange into your pocket. A very trifling thing, you say, I only took an orange. See that man with a plate of buttons, two for a penny, or it may be more, his back is turned, and a man puts his hand into the plate and slips a penny worth of buttons into his pocket. Now, what has he done! Why, under a very little temptation he has consented, with the eye of God looking right on him, to cast off God's authority and trample upon it for the value of a penny! Now he does not love that man whom he robbed, as he loves himself! His conduct says as plain as possible, God has commanded me to love my neighbour as myself, but I will love myself, and not my neighbour - I do not care what God says; I will do as I please. Now sinner, you would be afraid to say that, but you *do* it. You are too hypocritical and cowardly to say it; but you do it right in the face of Almighty God!!

Once more: the least sins against society are often the greatest against God. Suppose a case. Look at that man, he is under the greatest excitement, some one has seduced his wife in his absence from home; he returned and found it out; in his desperation and agony he meets the man who has so grievously injured him, and he takes his life. He has committed a great crime against society and against God. Now take another case - two men with two dogs pass along the street - the dogs begin to fight - one of the dogs receive some slight injury, and a slight scuffle ensues between their owners; and one injures the other. Now in this latter case there was very little temptation to commit the sin of injuring a neighbour compared with the former, and, therefore, this latter sin was as great as the former, and, perhaps, greater in the sight of God.

Once more: it is easy to see, from what has been said, how it is that multitudes misapprehend their true spiritual condition - I mean men are outwardly conformed to the letter of God's law, but who are not truly Christian men. It is very important to understand this, and come to a thorough understanding that it is not by obedience to the letter of the law that a man can be accepted of God. Take an illustration. We will suppose, if you please, that one of Her Majesty's ships of war turn pirates; they exhibit the black flag, the death's head and cross bones, and go forth to make war upon the ships of all nations. Now they understand very well the importance of discipline, and it is strictly enforced because they are fully aware that they can not secure their own ends without it. They take a ship, and the booty is distributed fairly to every man in proportion to his rank. Perhaps there is not a better disciplined ship in Her Majesty's navy; nor one in which there is more concern for the feelings and comfort of the whole crew. Now suppose that this ship should want provision and ammunition, and should seek a supply from the government on the score of their discipline and kindly feeling which exist among themselves! The government would ask whether their object in all they did was to vindicate the honour of their country and promote her interests! Now the reverse of this being true of them, is it not easy to see that they would be rightful refused their request by British Government! Where is the virtue of all their discipline and kindly feeling if they are employed in opposing the government and the interests of the citizens! Thus the moralist may boast of his morality, but all he does is from a selfish motive and for a selfish end, and this what constitutes him a sinner. Now suppose that human society in any part of the world should become perfect so far as intercourse between themselves is concerned. Their object is to secure some selfish end. It is indispensable that they should be faithful and kind to each other, as a condition of securing their selfish object. Suppose they should have the utmost discipline among themselves, and even manifest great benevolence. But if all this has relation to their own selfish objects, and not to the glory of God and the good of his kingdom, they are sinners, and only sinners continually. A merely moral man - a man who is not converted, a man who does, not act from love to God - has not a particle of anything good within him. In all his conduct he tramples on the authority of God's law - he acts from a selfish motive, and not from love to God, he has no reference to God in what he does.

Let me say again: I fear that there are great many professors of religion, who suppose that they are truly religious although they knew that there are some forms of sin which they have not given up - things which the law and the gospel both condemn. But they expect Christ to justify them. They think they have some religion, and do not expect to be very pious because they can not be perfect, and so they indulge in some forms of

sin, and are under the influence of certain forms of selfishness, and are thinking all the while, that because they keep such and such other commandments in the letter, that they will be saved at last. Thus they do not keep any of the commandments in the spirit of them, as God requires them to be kept, and if a man obeys not the law in the spirit, he does not obey it at all.

Once more: it is of the greatest importance that men should understand this, for there can not be a more dangerous idea than that men can serve God and mammon at the same time; that men can pick and choose among God's commandments - break those, and keep these in the letter, and yet be religious! This can never be. Human reason, as well as the Scriptures affirm that this must be true, and that its opposite can not.

Now I must break off my remarks, but before I sit down let me ask you a question. My dear hearers, are you conscious of indulging in any forms of sin? And if you are, do you still hold on to the hope that you will be saved? Are you indulging in these things that you know to be sins; so that if you were to meet Jesus Christ in the street you would have no occasion to say - is such a thing sin? You would be ashamed to ask such a question; for in the deep recesses of your heart you know it is sin. For let me say, although some persons try to persuade themselves that such and such things are not sins, yet if they knew they should not live ten minutes, they would conclude and acknowledge at once that they were. Now I do not mean that a Christian may not fall, under the influence of a powerful temptation, into sin, even as bad as David did. David was a good man, but under the influence of a powerful temptation he fell. But I doubt if a man could do what David did, in the present day of gospel light, and yet be a Christian. But if a Christian fall into sin he will not remain in its indulgence: he will be very anxious to have all his sins searched out, and forgiven. A true Christian will act from supreme love to God, and equal love to man. Now suppose a man should say - in some things I keep the true spirit of the law and of the gospel, but there are some forms of sin I have never given up; there are such and such things in which I have always indulged myself; notwithstanding I love God supremely, and supremely regard his authority, in some things I yield my will entirely up to God, but in others, I disobey him. Now what sort of talk would that be? It would be just the religion of a mass of people! They act in this way; but if they were to put it into words it would amount almost to blasphemy!

Another thing I would mention is this - if sinners would only say right out what they practice, what an awful state of society should we call it. If men were to profess the utmost contempt for God's authority we should be shocked. But men by their conduct; some by swearing and taking the name of God in vain, and others by cheating and taking advantage of their neighbours in every little thing, are really saying - I do not mind what God says; I have a great contempt for his law; I do not care whether I grieve him or his Spirit; I will do just what I like. If those who are so would only say it, the people would rise up and cast such blasphemy out of society. Suppose a child should be told to do a certain thing, and he should say, I will not, but go right away and disobey you before your eyes. You command them, but they treat you with contempt. They do not say I will not obey, but smile in your face and go and disobey you - what would you think of them? I will tell you what you would think, that the wickedness of their conduct could not be described in words.

O sinner! sinner! You do just this every day towards God, every one of you! But mind I do not bring this against you as a railing accusation: I have no personal quarrel with you; but I know you would despise me as a dishonest man if I should hesitate to tell you to your face, as God's minister, how you treat him! I have been a sinner myself, and have treated God as you are now treating him; and I know how you feel. When I was an impenitent sinner I never respected a man who did not tell me of my sins - I despised him. Now sinner, how long will you go on in this way rebelling against God and despising his authority? Will you make up your mind that this shall be no longer? When you can reconcile yourself to such treatment from your children, then you may treat God so, but not before. Will you then turn unto God and live? or will you continue to rebel and perish for ever? Which will you do?

18. THE SINNERS SELF-DESTRUCTION

“Do thyself no harm.” - Acts 16:28

Paul and Silas were preaching the gospel at Philippi, and Satan, it appears took new ground with them at this place, which, for a time, served greatly to embarrass them. There was a woman there who was the subject of demoniacal possession, and when the apostles were preaching she followed them from place to place, and called out after them - “These are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation;” and, of course, inasmuch as she was such a character, and so well-known Paul was very much grieved that she thus went after them, and bore testimony of this kind. He, therefore, cast the unclean spirit out of her in the name of Jesus Christ. This naturally gave great offence to those who made profit by her proceedings, and as they were influential persons they caused not small stir in the city. They brought them before the magistrates, and charged them with “turning the world upside down.” After this they were sent to jail, and thrust into the inner prison, and, lest they should possibly escape, their feet were made fast in the stocks. At midnight they prayed and sang praises unto God, and all the prisoners heard them. There was a great earthquake, and the very foundations of the prison were shaken, the bars and bolts were removed, and the doors thrown open. This awoke the jailer, who was sleeping in a part of the same building. Coming from his room, and beholding the state of things around him, he concluded the prisoners had escaped; and knowing that he should be hardly dealt with, he was greatly excited, and drawing his sword, was about to destroy himself. This was observed by Paul, who cried out with a loud voice - “Do thyself no harm: we are all here.” Then the jailer called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

God is always concerned lest the sinner should do himself harm, and what Paul said to the jailer in this case needs to be said to great multitudes of people in the present day; indeed, one way or the other, God is continually cautioning them not to injure themselves. It is not because this text teaches any particular doctrine that I have chosen it tonight, but for the purpose of calling attention to certain things of great importance.

I. No one can really do you spiritual harm but yourself.

II. Sin is the greatest harm.

III. The sources of danger.

IV. Things which you should guard against, as they are fatal.

I have said that no one can do a moral agent real spiritual injury but himself. Persons can tempt others, but unless the individual tempted consents, there is no sin on his part. The tempter may sin, but to suffer temptation is no sin. Truly and properly even Satan himself can not inflict spiritual harm upon men without their consent; for, unless they consent; for, unless they consent, they are not really harmed by temptation. In fact, although Satan never means them to do so, they are often benefited, rather than injured by temptation, when they manfully resist it. Where individuals designedly tempt others,

it is no thanks to them if it works good instead of evil. No one can inflict sin upon another; sin is a voluntary act on the part of the sinner; nobody can sin for you, or make you sin without your own consent, in any such sense as that God will hold you responsible for it.

This leads me to the next point. Sin is the greatest harm you can inflict upon yourself. Whatever else you may do it is of trifling importance compared with this. Sin is an eternal wrong to the immortal soul. But I need only to mention such points; it is unnecessary to enlarge on them. Whenever you wrong others by sin, you always do yourselves a greater wrong than you do them. Suppose, for example, that you have cheated another man, injured his character, or in some way inflicted an injury upon him; you have not inflicted any spiritual injury upon him, although you have wronged him temporally. But mark, in wronging him you have far more deeply wronged yourself; for your act was sin, but the wrong you have done him is not of so great importance - it is not so great a wrong to him as if he himself had committed a sin.

Now let me turn to the sources of danger. You are all apprised of the existence of temptation, which the Bible divides into three descriptions - the world, the flesh, and the devil. By the world is meant all that is without - by the flesh, our own nature - by the devil, the infernal influences by which we are sometimes tempted.

But my main design is to call attention to certain things by which men are in danger of doing themselves harm, and to can on them to be on their guard against them. First, I remark that men are in danger of doing themselves harm by the indulgence of prejudice. I have no doubt but that prejudice is one of the most common occasions of sin. Men are in very great danger of being prejudiced. For example, nearly the whole Jewish nation appears to have been ruined by prejudice. They were so committed to certain views, and so prejudiced in favour of certain doctrines which they had been taught, that when Christ came he was so completely over-against their prejudices - so different from what they expected - they had so given themselves up to their prejudices, that it had become their ruin. Who can contemplate the influence of religious prejudice without feeling inclined to warn everybody to be on their guard against it?

Prejudice is a pre-judgment, a making up of the mind beforehand without the requisite light and evidence. Now, in every age of the world this has been one of the great evils of mankind, and probably the judgment day will reveal the fact, that prejudice has ruined as many souls as almost any other thing in the world. Religion consists in believing and obeying the truth. Now, just so far as an individual is prejudiced, just so far he will, of course, not be under the influence of the truth. If he is committed to a one-sided view he will not know, do, or be sanctified by the truth, and of course, therefore, will not be saved. It is striking to see to what an extent mere prejudice oftentimes governs people on questions so definitely important as that of religion.

I have already adverted to the history of the Jewish nation, and the same is true, to an amazing extent, with respect to nominal Christians in the church. There is, perhaps, no denomination of Christians in which you will not find individuals who give the strongest evidence that their religion, such as it is, is a mere prejudice; and, in fact, some communities the mass of the membership appears to be in this condition; so that to attempt to preach to them contrary to their views, is useless, seeing that just so far

as it is opposed to their views, in so far they deem your teaching erroneous. This is an all-powerful argument with them. So amongst the Roman Catholics, for instance; every individual who knows anything of them knows how extremely difficult it is to get them to listen to anything unless it comes to them in a certain shape. Their religion itself is a mere mass of prejudices, and not, in reality a religion at all, and this the mass of them abundantly show in their lives.

Some years since I was called to labour in a locality in the United States where a multitude of Germans had taken up their abode. They were strongly imbued with the peculiar views entertained by their denomination. They were taught their catechism up to a certain age, when they came before the minister, answer certain questions, and if they can do so they are admitted to communion, and then confirmed; this, they are taught to believe is religion. I have frequently been told, when labouring amongst them - "Oh! I'm a Christian already." "Are you indeed? Who made you a Christian?" "Dr. Millenberg," was the reply in one case. "Well, but do you call that religion?" I have asked, "Oh, yes, that is *our* religion." Now, every drunkard I met in the streets had been to the communion, said his catechism, learned his lesson, and been received into the bosom of the church. So fatal and deep was their prejudice that it was astounding to see the masses in such a position. Their minister, for instance, would make such appeals to them as this, if there was any great revivals of religion in the neighbourhood - "Why do you go to hear such preaching as this? If you embrace that religion you will turn against your fathers, and you may as well say your fathers are gone to hell! Did they pray and do such and such things? Did they tell their religious 'experience,' and how they were 'converted?' Will you turn against your fathers, give them all up, and proclaim by your conduct that they are all gone to hell?" In this way they were harangued from Sabbath to Sabbath; and is it wonderful that while persons thus have their prejudices appealed to, that they die in their sins by thousand after thousand? No minister, who appeals to the people's prejudices, can hope to promote religion thereby; they can not be in a more unfavourable attitude to become truly religious; for, until they become honest-hearted, as little children, they will not be converted. Prejudices against individuals is oftentimes a very great obstacle to conversion. people do not seem to see that even when convicted these prejudices prevent their being converted. In fact, this was as total a barrier to their being converted as if they were in the habit of stealing, getting drunk, or anything else of that kind. This is not sufficiently understood. People who indulge unreasonable prejudices in this way, are often surprised to find they make small progress in religion; they can not think how it is. Some persons are apt to fall into this error from their natural temperament; and such persons are in danger of doing themselves fatal harm. This is one of the rifest resources of destruction among men. How few there are after all, comparatively, whom you do not find so unreasonably committed either in favour of, or against somebody, that they are in a perfectly dishonest state of mind. Press them with religion, if you please, such is their dishonesty you can do them no good. I say the more on this subject because, when conversing with those persons, I have often found that they had never thought of these prejudices as a hindrance of their spiritual prayers.

Another thing against which persons need to be warned, is resistance to, and trifling with their own consciences. The reason that there is so little sensibility on the subject of religion is, that persons have trifled so long with their own consciences. People complain that they have none of the influences of the Holy Spirit; this is very common.

How is it? If we could see through their past history we should perceive times when they felt keenly on religious subjects, especially when they sinned; but they indulged first in one sin and disregarded the reproof of conscience, and then in another and another, till at length the voice of the inward monitor was allowed to pass unheeded, and eventually, except in very extreme cases, it scarcely spoke at all, and finally sinks down into an indignant silence!

There are two things belonging to what we generally term conscience - the mind's judgment, the moral character of the man, and that kind of feeling created by them - i.e., a feeling answerable to the mind's judgment of our moral conduct. That which is more generally understood by the term conscience is the twinge of the sensibility; for so is reason related to the feeling part of the mind that when it points out sin in an individual, (that is before he becomes benumbed by resistance) it will produce a feeling impelling the mind to avoid such things. When the mind says such a thing is right, and it is your duty to do it - that is, when the judgment of the mind says so - there is a feeling pressing the individual up to do it, or if he has done it without this it causes a deep sting of remorse, when this feeling has not been trifled with, it makes the mind bleed to the very centre; but, when resisted the impulsive part ceases, the remorse ceases, and at length even when any thing is clearly seen to be a duty, not the least impulse is felt to do it. It affirms such and such to be duty, but there is no echoing feeling or tendency in the mind to go in that direction - only a cold naked judgment, that he *ought* to do it. He has done something wrong, oh! yes; and there is the cold judgment, and that is all, there is no remorse. When persons have thus completely silenced the impulsive voice, and there is nothing left but the cold naked judgment - what then? They complain of the "want of conviction." They have "no heart to become religious," no feeling on the subject. They know themselves to be sinners, but they feel it not, and care not for it. They know they are in danger of going to hell, but it does not alarm them. They know they have lived in sin, but they do not feel it; they are like a marble pillar. I have no doubt that some of you recognise in this picture your own past or present condition. Can not you remember when you believed a thing to be wrong, felt strongly drawn back from it; or, if you did it, you felt a sting of remorse which made you writhe, and perhaps even led you to pray and confess it to God? But how is it now? Where is all that impulse now? Perhaps the cold naked affirmation is present - that you can never resist - but, make, perhaps all the results which tend to life within yourself is gone. Where are you now? Ah! where are you now? I would earnestly caution you to be careful how you trifle with conscience, for when you have once stifled its voice - where are you then?

Another mode by which men are in danger of doing themselves fatal harm is by resisting the Holy Spirit. Perhaps it is always true that when the conscience is resisted, the Holy Spirit is resisted, and that this impulse is often, if not always, connected with the Divine influence. When the Spirit of God is quenched and grieved away, there is the utmost danger that the conscience will become entirely silent, and that no truth can savingly reach the soul: for, observe, it is through the conscience that the Spirit of God works, and that the truth takes hold on men; but for a man's conscience, he would no more be converted than a marble pillar. If you take this away, virtually, by resisting it, there is no more hope of your conversion than if you had no conscience.

There is another thing which persons need to be warned, and that is getting into some snare form which they can hardly escape. it is dreadful to see how men fall into such snares. it is the policy of Satan to crowd men early in life into some position from which he knows they will not retreat. Men sometimes do certain things which are almost sure to be fatal to them; Satan therefore crowds them always into these false steps - into the commission of some sin, or the assumption of some false position - they commit themselves to something which they dare not confess, and they can not repent without confessing - how shall they get out of it? For example, who does not know the influence of telling a lie? Sometimes a sinner's telling a lie will almost certainly ruin him. He will get himself into such a position by telling this lie in order to "make everything straight," and then telling another to cover the first up, and so on, and on that the results of this one sin will often prove fatal; not that such an offense, in itself, was unpardonable, but it necessarily committed the mind to a course of lying, and it rushes on in a course involving the sacrifice of one principle after another, and onward and onward you go.

Let me ask all persons here - have you well considered this going? Did you young men ever seriously reflect on the danger of telling your employer a lie? Have you done so? What a step you have taken? You will probably be led to tell some one else a lie in order to cover it up, and then you will be led to another and another and so on. Where will you stop? The same is true of business transactions; the devil never shocks men at first by some atrocious proposition; he strives to lead them into unguarded positions - to push them into danger by committing themselves, by some apparently trifling act, to a certain course of conduct - and then he seeks to cut off their retreat. For instance, there is a young man who has taken some small advantage of his employer, and dare not confess it for fear of being thrown out of employment - what shall he do? He conceals it, and then goes on in a course of deceit to keep it concealed. Whenever it is likely to come out he resorts to some new fraud to cover it up; and thus his escape is rendered more and more difficult. Oh! sinner do thyself no harm. Do not take the first penny or first farthing! Sinners, of all persons, have most need to be on their guard against placing themselves in such a position as to cut off their own retreat.

Another thing to be guarded against is the formation of some bad habit. How many thousands of young men have come to the City of London, for example and allow themselves to get into some bad habit! They have been taught better at home; their parents have warned them; and watched their start in London with fear and trembling. They come here, and give up their old habits of order, and keep late hours at night, give way to intemperance, and so the occasional indulgence grows up into a habit, becomes conformed, and often almost ineradicable. Persons should be on their guard against the formation of these artificial appetites; for they are always more despotic and dangerous than those which are natural. For example, the appetite for alcohol is an artificial appetite; that is, no unperverted constitution ever sought poison, loved it, and took to the habitual use of it; and if this habit once gets the mastery over an individual, how awfully dangerous is their position! The use of tobacco belongs to the same category; it, too, is a totally artificial appetite; there is nothing more odious to the taste, at first. When I walk along the streets, and see your poor ill-clad artisans with their pipes in their mouths, how I pity them! It has got such a hold on many persons, that the sacrifice, to them, would be great indeed. Let me say to all smokers, snuffers, and chewers, who are present tonight - Is this a proper use for you to make of God's

money? Is this the way to treat your constitution? Is this a practice which will commend itself when you come to render an account to God? Perhaps some of you will say, these, after all, are very insignificant things to preach about; but to you young men, they are not small things at all; for such habits invariably lead to something worse.

Men need also to be warned against engaging in any improper business. I mean some business which will ruin you souls, if persisted in. Be careful what you do in this direction. Undertake no business which is injurious to your fellow-men - nothing which is inconsistent with the well-being of society - no business, in short, that you can not pursue honestly, with an enlightened, upright heart, for the glory of God. now this is a very common sense thing. Every one can see that when an individual engages in a business he can not consecrate to God, by that very engagement he has formally withdrawn his allegiance from Christ, and set up for himself. Be careful, then, for you had better have no business at all, ten thousand times than engage in one in which you can not keep your conscience void of offence. But you must also be careful not to err by pursuing a proper business, for improper motives; if you take the most proper business in the world, and pursue it in an improper manner, it will be fatal. It may be selling Bibles, even; if you go about it selfishly, and yet say, "I am vending Bibles," - what if you are? Take care! Mark me, you may just as easily be selfish in that calling as in anything else. In fact, the more sanctimonious the exterior of a business, the greater your danger of pursuing it from wrong motives, without being aware of it. Take for instance, the preaching of the gospel. You can all see at once, that a man who preaches the gospel because of the nature of the profession, might easily give himself credit for it, while it was in fact only selfishness; because he preached the gospel that he might take it for granted that he was in the service of God, whereas he was serving himself in the gospel and not of the gospel. Be careful, then, that you do not prosecute your business selfishly; for if you do, it will be fatal to your souls.

Avoid dangerous companions; if they are agreeable, they are so much the more dangerous on that account. It is always a great snare to young people when they fall in with a very agreeable but unprincipled companion. That young man is a very agreeable companion; he often calls on you, treats you very politely; sometimes asks you, perhaps to an oyster supper, or something else; but he is an unprincipled young man, though he does not at once show it - all the worse for you; the greater your danger. if he were not agreeable you would not be in so much danger of receiving fatal harm. But he is very agreeable, and the devil knows it, and loves to have him make himself agreeable; he may draw you into some snare, and you are committed for life and for death. It is just the same with books; they are often all the more dangerous because of their being agreeable.

Again - amusements. Ah! how very amusing they are! But where do they tend? You "must have some amusement," you say. How many millions have been destroyed by not being on their guard against these things! Beware also, of worldly ambition. You see a great many examples of this. Beware of the love of gain. What would it profit you to gain the whole world if you lose your own soul? Look at such a man getting rich - do you envy him? The Lord may let him have it - but what then? The richest man in America, a few years since, was called upon by a person who was employed to write his biography. (A person who knew him well, told me that he was the most wretched

man he ever knew; so numerous were the calls upon him for charitable objects, that at length he became uneasy whenever he heard a knock, lest it might be some one to beg his money; and such was the state of mind when his biographer called upon him.) "On the whole what do you think of your life, now that you have nearly done with it?" said the biographer. "I think it is a failure," was the reply. "A failure?" exclaims the biographer. "Yes, a failure," was again the response. He had more money than any man in America, yet he considered his life to have been a failure. Ah! he had been greedy of gain; he had loved money, and had got it, but he had lost his soul. he had committed himself to gain, till it had become a passion, and he was eaten up with it. Are you, any of you, doing yourselves harm in this way? Are you so intent on obtaining property that it haunts you even on the Sabbath? Indeed? Why then are you benumbing your souls - riveting your own chains. You ought to take warning, and fly from it as from the very gates of Hell!

Another great danger is that when men become wealthy, they are liable to become "purse proud," and thus ruin themselves. Even intemperance itself is oftentimes not more fatal to the soul; it is manifestly inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel; but there is a great temptation to it. It is remarkable to what an extent men who succeed in acquiring property become haughty in their demeanour. Others indeed need to be warned against family pride. This is a fatal snare by which men do themselves infinite harm.

Again. persons often run to men for advice instead of to God. Some years since, at Detroit, in America, there lived a gentleman who belonged to one of the highest families in the place, and who was surrounded by a large circle of the very uppermost class of society. He was deeply convicted of his sins, very anxious about his soul, at length he became so intensely anxious that he could no longer refrain from speaking to me on the subject. I pressed him to submit. "I can not do it," said he "without consulting my friends, without which I never take any important step, as they would think it unkind and ungenerous of me." "But are you going to consult unconverted men about your soul?" "Oh! Yes." "But I am certain if you do this, you will tempt the Spirit of God." But he "thought he should not." I pressed him for half an hour to make at once his peace with God. But no, he persisted to the last that his relations must be consulted; and so important a step must not be taken without their consent. Persons often thus consult their friends, and virtually commit themselves to their advice, rather than follow the dictates of their own conscience, their sense of right, and the law of God. They want no advice where the path of duty is so plain; but the fact is, they are afraid to displease their friends, and they therefore go on displeasing God! What a foolish and fatal course is this! - flesh and blood before God!

The next rock on which may split is the harbouring of resentment, and while this is done conversion is utterly impossible. They have not the spirit which God requires; for except you forgive others their trespasses, God will not forgive yours. Some people harbour resentment more easily than others, and seem almost unconscious of it, and appear unable to see that they are injuring *themselves* by so doing. Have you been injured? "Yes," and *therefore* you entertain a spirit of resentment, and thought of retaliation if you have an opportunity. Do you, indeed? Now do you know that Satan pleases himself with these thoughts; for even if that man has ruined you, you are doing yourself more wrong than he had done; for, mark me, the wrong that he has done you

could not injure your soul, if you did not harbour resentment. You pass that man by, and do not speak to him on any account; and pray, is that the spirit to be saved in? Avoid, therefore, doing yourself injury by harbouring a spirit of revenge. Be equally careful to shun feelings of envy and jealousy. I have often thought that were we to look over human society we should find, perhaps, a very great number of persons who are kept from being converted, and go down to their graves in their sins because they have been all the time harbouring ill-feeling towards some one who has injured them. Something has occurred in early youth, or even in childhood, which has placed an individual - or, perhaps, an entire family - in the position of enemies, and you go down to the grave hating them. Now the Bible teaches us plainly that this state of mind is fatal to the soul. Satan chuckles over it - *avoid it!* Guard against all feelings of enmity or retaliation towards anybody, from any cause whatever; I have always taken the greatest pains on this point in my own family. Parents! What kind of an example are you setting your children on this point? Consider well and examine your position in this respect.

Guard against bearing any sin on your conscience: There is some sin of omission or of commission which, perhaps, you are putting off, it may be leaving it for a death-bed. You have wronged somebody, and you think confession to them and restitution, as far as circumstances permit, will at present, disgrace you but that you will attend to it before you die. You are too proud, in fact to do it now; you will attend to it when you come to die; but will God accept the act then, think you? When death knocks you will find yourself in no such a position as you are calculating upon; if you thus deliberately refuse or neglect to confess and forsake your sins - you are all but certain to die as you have lived, for you have been tempting God. Do not, therefore, delay to attend to this matter. Many neglect to do what they know to be their duty, and yet pray to God as if they had really done all that they ought, till they eventually harden their hearts to a degree which is absolutely fatal - till they have, in fact totally lost their religious sensibility. Beware, then, of the delusion that you can possibly be saved while you are in any respect guilty of dishonesty - beware of tempting God and ruining yourselves by the indulgence of so fatal an error. If God forgave you, while you were dishonest or insincere in any respect, he would become the minister of unrighteousness - he can not do it.

But I must hasten to a close; I will, therefore, content myself with very briefly indicating some other things which need to be guarded against. Be careful lest, by some incautious act, you be drawn into a position which requires the practice of habitual deception - which necessitates either confession, which might perhaps disgrace you, or involves the necessity of making your life a perfect lie. Sometimes lovers deceive each other with regard to pecuniary prospects or something else, and what awful consequences have been known to result! But the wrong you are doing to yourself is, in all such cases, even greater than the wrong done to others. Sin is the greatest absurdity in the universe, yet - only think! - here are you, selfish beings, doing yourselves the greatest injury that can possibly be done to you! All the wicked men on earth, or all the devils in hell could never have done what you will do, if you go on in your present course - they could never have ruined your soul! This will, be the most agonising consideration in hell - that you have done it all yourself. You, and you *alone*, have done this infinite harm to your immortal soul!

Suppose some of you have placed yourselves in such a position - taken some false oath, committed some theft, or done some injury in some way, and you are sorry for it, but refuse to confess to the party concerned, and do all in your power to make restitution! - and suppose that it should be told in the solemn judgment that, instead of making restitution you threw yourself on Christ? Suppose it should be found that God had forgiven you while in this dishonest state of mind? But you can not suppose such an absurdity, for it would disgrace him before the whole universe. But you are too proud to make restitution. Indeed! Then you are too proud to be saved! Beware, then - I speak to young men particularly - beware, young men, of taking the first step in a course, the results of which are so terrible! Beware of the first lie - the first dishonest act! If you have already commenced such a course, forsake it at once; no results which may ensue, can be so great an evil as your going to hell. There is no evil so great as that. But many are too proud, and prefer to go on in deceit, because they have gone on in it so long that they tremble at the sacrifice - but one hour of hell will be infinitely worse than the worst of such cases can possibly be!

Do not leave it till you come to die - after you have gone on in injustice - quenching the Spirit and stifling conscience - how do you think to make it up so easily with God at your latest moments, when the breath is just departing from your body? Oh! Sinner, how awful will then be your reflections! How your weakened memory will start again into activity, and recall the time when you told the lie that committed you to a course of lying to cover it up - when you indulged in the first act of extravagance, which finally led you to plunder your employers! You will then see the vast and awful importance of the counsel I now give - to avoid the first *act*, or, if that be too late, to come out of it while the sacrifice is yet comparatively small, and do not - let me entreat you - do not defer till the matter becomes so serious as to render your confession and restitution next to an impossibility! Perhaps a week, or a day, longer in your present course, may lead you to some act which will render the retracing of your steps tenfold more serious than it is at the present moment; and, in fact, may thereby seal your destiny for eternity!

Sinner! Mercy yet calls. Jesus is here with the offer of pardon and salvation. No matter how great your sin. If you will now, indeed, back right out, and pour it all out before the Lord, wash you hands in innocence, bathe yourself in the blood of Jesus, and you shall be forgiven!

19. THE RATIONALITY OF FAITH

*“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief;
but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.” - Romans 4:20*

These words were spoken of Abraham, as you will see by reading the connection in which they are found. Faith is the heart's confidence in God. This is faith in its generic form; its specific form relates to particular things - belief in the promises, in Christ, in the doctrines of the Bible, and in all the various assertions that God makes in his word. This specific form of faith differs from faith in its generic or simple form, which implies a general confidence in the existence, attributes, and character of God. The mind's resting in these things is faith; that is faith in its simple form. Mark, faith in God is not a mere assent to these things, nor a mere intellectual conviction that they are true; but faith is the heart, and the mind, and the will, resting in this truth - that God is, that he possesses certain attributes, and a certain character. Faith in its specific form is the belief of the heart in certain declarations of God, a belief in his wisdom and goodness; in his assertions respecting Christ, and in all those things which he has said and promised. There are a great many specific forms in which faith develops itself - but the root of it is heart confidence in God himself.

In speaking from the words which I have chosen for my text this morning I purpose to notice -

I. Some things in the word of God which are exceedingly calculated to try the faith of finite minds.

II. Show how faith disposes of these things; and that true faith is not subdued and overcome by a consideration of these things.

III. I shall show the great object of these trials of faith

IV. Professors that stumble or stagger at these things lose the blessing consequent upon them, as a natural necessity.

I. SOME OF THE THINGS WHICH ARE CALCULATED TO TRY THE FAITH OF GOD'S CREATURES

One that is very common and most striking is the existence of so much evil and misery in this world. God declares that he is acquainted with all. He affirms that he is omnipotent, omniscient - he is every where present, and knows all things, and is all powerful. He declares himself infinitely good, and disposed to do good. Now, that under the government of such a being as this there should be so much evil, and so much that is sinful, and so much misery - as a matter of fact we know there is - is greatly calculated to try the faith of men. That these things should exist, and be every where observable in this world to an immense extent, is to many minds so great a mystery, so difficult to reconcile with the existence and declared attributes of God, that they stumble, and even call in question the fact, that there is a God at all. By the bye, another thing that God asserts, and that reason also affirms, is the existence of a providence which guides and controls all events; that God has a design in everything that he does; that at the very beginning God had a design, and that in what he does he

is pursuing this design to its accomplishment; and that this design proceeds from a being who is infinitely good and infinitely wise.

Now the existence of this evil that there is in the world does not seem to harmonise with the things that God says of himself - with his wisdom and goodness - many minds therefore find great difficulty in getting over these facts, and it is more than unbelief ever can accomplish. Understand, it is not a present my design to explain this, but simply to notice the facts at which unbelief stumbles, and which are calculated to try the faith of God's creatures. The introduction of sin into this world, and its existence in the world is greatly calculated to try the faith of the most holy being in the universe. There is no doubt that they were unable to comprehend for a time why God allowed such a state of things to be; the reason for all this may have gradually developed itself, but at first the difficulty that was presented to their minds could have only been overcome by faith - how this is done I shall observe in another part of my discourse.

But let me say again: the manner in which the Bible reveals God is also a great stumbling-block to many; the doctrine of the Trinity, for example, there are a great many that stumble at it because they can not understand it, any better than they can understand a great many other things; because they can not understand it they reject it, and say that it can not be, and so they will not receive it simply because they can not explain it. Just so with respect to the incarnation of the Son of God; many men because they can not understand how humanity and Deity could be united, reject the doctrine, and will not believe it. Now it is admitted at once, there is no occasion for denying it, and to do so would be as absurd as it is unnecessary, that these doctrines are very mysterious; but they are announced as facts, that God was in Christ, that Christ was both God and man; of course it is readily admitted that this declaration is a great trial to the faith of finite creatures; but then the announcement is made by God himself and ought to be believed. The doctrine of the atonement is another stumbling-block to men; that God should give his own Son to die for the sins of mankind, and that he should actually suffer, is a difficulty that can only be overcome by faith - unbelief will suggest a multitude of difficulties and reject it.

But let me say again: the resurrection, the doctrine of justification by faith, the doctrine of sanctification by faith, and all the other doctrines of the bible, are stumbling-blocks to the minds of men. Indeed individuals who find no difficulties in them have not faith, and show that they have not well considered them; but however difficult they may be, there is ten thousand times greater absurdity in disbelieving than in exercising faith in them, given as they are on the testimony of God himself. But, nevertheless, unbelief finds great difficulty in admitting them. The mind that has not confidence in God refuses to believe, because it can not explain how these things all are - of course, such a mind will stumble and stagger at every step.

But once more, the manner in which sin was introduced into the world is also a great stumbling-block to those who have no confidence in God, and therefore can not rest upon the revealed fact, unless they can explain it. Of course if they can not receive what God says, unless he gives them his reasons for everything that he does, they will find great difficulty in getting along. Suppose a child should have no confidence in his Father, and should therefore want the reasons for his father's conduct in everything that he did, and should require to have explained to him in a satisfactory manner how

everything was done before he could believe it - who can not see that a family of such unbelievers, stumbling and staggering at every step, would have no confidence in their father at all; for if he was a man conducting a very extensive business on a vast scale, they could not understand as children what even perhaps many men could not comprehend if it were explained to them. How absurd then for the children not to put confidence in their father because they could not understand the reasons for all his conduct.

But let me say again: the very greatness of God's promises is often a sever trial to faith. He promises things so great to persons so undeserving - indeed so ill-deserving - that unbelief finds it difficult to believe him, because he says so much, and promises so much. But again: the providence of God is often a great trial to faith. How remarkable was the conduct of god towards Abraham, and how greatly calculated to try his faith. He called him out of his father's house, and Abraham obeyed not knowing whither he went. God had reasons in his own mind for his conduct in this matter - he intended to make of Abraham a great nation, and through him communicate his will to men, and that from his family the Saviour of men should proceed - but he gave Abraham no such intimation of what he was going to do; he called him from his country, and told him to go to a certain place that he should show him. After Abraham had obeyed the command, God promised to give him a certain land for a possession and to his seed after him; and although he had no family, God called him and said, Look toward the heavens and see if you can count the stars for multitude, and promised that his seed should be as numerous as the stars of heaven - and that he would give him the land of Canaan for a possession, and make him the father of many nations. This promise was long and remarkably delayed; he lived in the land that was promised to him for a possession only on sufferance, and when his wife died, he was obliged to purchase a burial place in that very land that God had promised should be his own - yet we see no signs of any stumbling in his faith. After a long period had elapsed, God promised Abraham that he should have a son by his wife Sarah. Now both Abraham and Sarah were very old, she was long past the age when it was common for women to have children, nevertheless Abraham believed that god would do what he had promised. Those who will read and ponder well all the circumstances connected with the triall of Abraham's faith, will se that he must have been very severely tried indeed. Now, mar, by and by, after a long time, this promised son was born. The lad grew - when all at once God takes Abraham by surprise - as he seems always to have done - and says "Take thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, and go to a mountain that I will tell thee of, and offer him there for a burnt-offering." He not only says to Abraham, "take thy son," but he reminds him that it is his only son, whom he loves; and it is this son, this son of promise, this beloved son, whom he is to offer upon the altar. Now, how infinitely strange is all this; yet Abraham staggered not; he believed that God was able to raise him from the dead. He had such strength of faith that he appears not to have been much trouble of mind about it; he does not seem even to have discovered to Sarah that he had received any such communication from God; he was so calm that Sarah did not perceive anything was the matter with him. The next morning he started with his servants to offer Isaac at the place which God was to point out to him. When they came in sight of the place, he caused his servants to wait, lest they should interfere with him when carrying out the command of God. Abraham and his son ascended the mountain where the sacrifice was to be offered: Isaac did not understand what was going to be done - he knew indeed that Abraham was going to offer a burnt offering,

for they had the fire and the wood, but he did not know that he was to be the victim, it did not occur to him at all, for he asked where the lamb was that Abraham intended to offer. So calm was Abraham, that Isaac did not notice anything different in his manner; and to the question of his son, Abraham replied, the Lord will provide himself with a lamb for a burnt-offering. When he had prepared the altar, he bound Isaac and laid him on the wood, just as he would have done a lamb, and then took the knife and he was about to slay him, but God called, and said, "Abraham, Abraham" - repeating his name rapidly, so as to arrest his attention in a moment, "lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And when Abraham lifted up his eyes, he saw a ram caught in a thicket by his horns, and he offered it instead of his son." God did this to test the implicitness of Abraham's faith; and this was as plainly manifested as if he had sacrificed his son - for he did do it so far as his mind was concerned; he believed that God would raise him from the dead if sacrificed, for he had no doubt at all that God would fulfil his promise. Now this was a beautiful exhibition and illustration of faith. But let me say, this was exceedingly calculated to try Abraham, as you will perceive. And the manner in which God very often fulfils his promises to men is to them a great stumbling-block - they are expecting him to fulfil them in one way, and he takes a direct opposite course, which is calculated to subvert all their ideas of things. Now all such things as these are exceedingly calculated to try our faith in God. But strong faith will not suffer itself to stumble at such things. Why sold it? Faith embraces at once all the attributes of God; and, therefore, has confidence in him, and does not seek to understand everything before yielding the heart to him. There are, and must be, multitudes of things that we can not understand, nor would it be useful for us to understand at present.

II. HOW IT IS THAT FAITH DISPOSES OF THESE DIFFICULTIES

If God's attributes are what he declares them to be, there are things that can not be explained to finite beings. Now for example; take the doctrine of the Trinity. To be sure human reason can not explain that, nor is any explanation called for; God simply announces the fact in the bible, that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are God. Now that God should manifest himself in ten hundred thousand beings at one and the same time is not contrary to reason. For example, we find that at one time, before the destruction of Sodom, three individuals appeared to Abraham, and one of them who is called Jehovah, informed Abraham what they were going to do, and Abraham put up a prayer to have Sodom saved - you recollect the afflicting circumstance. We learn that there were three men, or apparently so; two of them probably were angels in human form, and the other was no less a being than Jehovah himself. Now mark! Who can doubt but that God could have assumed the same form in millions of cases at the same time in different parts of the world, for there would be nothing contrary to reason in that. There is nothing then unreasonable in the supposition that God should exist in three persons or three hundred thousand million persons! We say there is nothing unreasonable in it. Who does not know that there is not? What then do men mean when they say that they can not believe in the Trinity? Why not believe? What do such men suppose they know about infinity? Can they affirm of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost that these three can not exercise and manifest the attributes of God? But as the fact is announced, there need be no evidence of it to the man who has faith. Faith

makes no effort to understand it. If you object to this, let me ask, how do you know that you exist yourselves? O yes, you say, we know that we exist; we believe it. What makes you believe it? Can you explain it? Did you choose your body? Can you tell the connection between matter and spirit? How can you prove what yourselves are?

Some years since, I was walking with a gentleman in the city of New York, and we were talking about religion and mind, and he stopped right short in the street and said, "you say such and such things about mind; now what is mind?" "If you tell me," said I, "what matter is, I will tell you what mind is." "Why," said he, "matter has the property of extension, solidity, and so forth;" but he did not name any of the primary attributes of matter. "Well," I replied, "mind wills, thinks, feels, and the like." He looked at me quite astonished. I continued, "you have told me some of the attributes of matter, can you tell what those attributes are?" "I do not know," said he. "Neither can I explain what the substance of mind is." If the wisest philosopher in the universe were standing in this pulpit, a little child might ask him such questions as he could not answer or explain any more than we can explain the doctrine of the Trinity not a bit. There is not a single thing in the universe in all the kingdom of nature when you come to dive to the bottom of it, which is not as difficult to explain as any doctrine of the Bible. Why then believe in any and all of these things? Why believe in your own existence? The fact is, that men do not disbelieve things because they are mysterious 'till they come to the subject of religion, because the world around them is so deeply mysterious that there is not a single thing that they can understand to the bottom, yet they are enabled to believe in them. It is very frequently the case that people do not realise that there is a mystery in anything but religion.

Now I know that philosophy can in part explain many things, and that those things which a few years ago were considered mysterious and even marvellous, are now understood. Science has already placed mankind in a position to explain the theory of many things that were deep mysteries and spread them out before the minds of the people. But speaking generally, both with regard to the spiritual and the natural world, men have to live by faith. They believe in the various things around them in the natural world although they may not be able to understand them. The same is true of spiritual things; we must receive much on testimony that can not be explained to us; and probably, in many cases, God would not explain them to us even if we could understand them because it would not be well for us, but he leads us step by step to a correct understanding of things that may be useful and necessary for us to know.

Now in relation to the question of sin and its necessary attendant, misery, as it exists in our world; there is a mystery about it. Of course, every mind affirms that where sin is, there misery ought to be; but the question of wonder is, how sin came into the world, why it was permitted! But that this is a wise order of things, nobody can doubt. Man was made superior to all the rest of the inhabitants of this globe; and we see by his power and sagacity and knowledge, he was designed to be the head of the creation. But mark! men are in rebellion against God. This is a simple matter of fact; there is nothing more certain in the universe than that men as a race have set God at nought and bid him defiance.

Now reason affirms that the curse of God should be written upon everything in the universe in order to testify to God's real character, and that it should not be mistaken.

But while we see that God does testify against sin, there are also indications that he has a strong disposition to be merciful as far as he wisely can; but the difficulties are many and great in the way of his forgiving sin. But let me say, faith in God does not find it very difficult to remove all these obstructions. Disbelief says sin exists, and looking at God's government as a system of moral law, it does not appear that sin can ever have been forgiven; in such a government, pardon is impossible. But faith says at once, God is kind, wise, and good, as well as infinitely powerful; misery and sin exist, but they are allowed to continue in the world only for a wise purpose to assist in bringing about the end at which he aims; for although sin is so great an abomination, God will bring good out of it. Look at the sin of Judas; the devil put it into his heart to betray the Son of God to his enemies and to his dismay, he saw the greatness of his crime; but God overruled their evil intentions. His purpose was that the blood of his dear Son should be shed as an atonement for sin.

Now, although we can not understand the reason why God should permit the existence of sin in the world at all, faith can easily dispose of the difficulties which may suggest themselves. Faith believes that everything that God does must be infinitely good and wise. The fact is, unbelief in such matters is the most unreasonable thing in the world. If you profess not to believe anything 'till you understand it, why do you believe in your own existence? What do you know of volition? You move your muscles, but how you can not tell. Faith, I say, disposes of all these difficulties, and is not unreasonable in so doing. Take Abraham's case. God promises that Abraham shall have a son. "I shall have it," he says; "I am very old, and Sarah is very old; no matter how old, God is able to give us a son." The child is born and is growing up when God calls to Abraham and tells him to go and offer Isaac in sacrifice, and Abraham says, "I will go, God has a good reason for the requirement; I know he must; he can not have any other; he is infinitely good and infinitely wise; he can not have made any mistake. The path then of duty is plain and I will walk in it." Oh, says unbelief, how will the promise be fulfilled, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called!" "I do not know," said Abraham, "but God is able to raise him from the dead." Thus, you see his faith very quickly disposed of the difficulty although it was very great. Now is there anything inconsistent with reason in all this? Why no. Just look at it right in the face.

My own reason tells me that God is infinitely perfect in all his attributes, everywhere and in everything, and that either permissively or actively, he is concerned in everything that takes place. I find myself in a universe surrounded by a multitude of things that I can not explain and that even God himself could not explain to me because of my limited capacity, but these things are true nevertheless; and as the law of progression operates, I come to understand many things which were before, dark and inexplicable to my mind. And does not reason tell us that there must be a vast many things in the government of an infinite God that a finite mind can not comprehend? But when a man is in a spiritual state of mind, faith takes the place of knowledge. The little child, for instance, lives by faith. Human society exists by faith; destroy all confidence, all faith, and society could not exist; and no business be transacted. And in the spiritual state of man, faith is just as necessary. I have not time to enlarge upon this now. We now come to explain briefly

III. THE DESIGN OF THESE TRIALS

Everyone can see that one great object is to strengthen faith. I have often heard it remarked, by intelligent people too, that in heaven faith will not exist, because there, we shall walk by sight. Now there is some truth in that, but much greater error. It is true that many things which we merely believe here we shall know there; but there will be much to call forth our faith; for there must be in the government of God much that it would require millions of ages to understand, and we shall go on acquiring knowledge throughout the immensity of eternity, and thus, there will be need of faith in God in eternity as in time; it will be as true in heaven as on earth. Suppose that the angels had not faith, why the fall of man must have given a shock to the inhabitants of heaven. But they believed that God had some wise design in that he permitted man to fall. Now this is the way faith disposes of everything; and let what will come, there is no alarm or doubt but all will be right.

I had intended to show in the next place that those who stumble and stagger must lose the blessing consequent upon believing as a natural necessity, which everyone can see must be the case, but I see that I must close with one remark. Those who will not believe God, there is no hope for. Suppose you had a family of children and they should lose confidence in you as a business man, they would stagger and stumble at every step you took just because you could not explain to them all your plans. You say to them, dear children, I can not explain these things to you, I am labouring for your good, therefore be quiet, be passive, and have confidence in me that all will be well; but if they will not, what can you do with them? They must remain in their unbelieving, unconverted state. Now it is the same in God's government. There are many things that can not be explained to men and yet they will not exercise faith, and if they persist in their unbelief, they will go stumbling and fretting to the gates of hell! Some people will take nothing on trust; they must catechise their Maker; and if he does not explain everything to them, they have no confidence in him hence, it is said that they shall have their part with liars in the lake of fire. My dear hearers, the most unreasonable and blasphemous abomination in the world is unbelief.

20. THE REWARD OF FERVENT PRAYER

“Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it” - Psalm 81:10

These words were addressed by God to the Church. There is nothing in the context in which they are found that particularly demands explanation. I would, therefore, proceed at once to say that this promise and injunction being addressed to the Church was also, of course, addressed to individual Christians. Whenever a promise or an injunction is applicable to the Church, it is also applicable to each individual composing the Church. This reveals to us the principle on which God deals with His people. The spirit of what is written here is even more true. In briefly considering this subject, I propose to show:

I. What this language means.

II. What it implies.

III. What its relationship is to our responsibilities.

I. WHAT THIS LANGUAGE MEANS

Of course it is figurative: “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” Does it mean literally to open the mouth wide and He will fill it with something without our understanding what?

“I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt.”

This was addressed to the Church of old, and the spirit of it is addressed to the Church in all ages. It is said in the eighth verse, “Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me; there shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” The language, then, is figurative, and is to be understood in the following ways.

God enjoins us to ask of Him great things. The injunction is not only, “Open thy mouth,” but open it wide; open it fully to its utmost capacity; by which it is to be understood that we are to ask of God great things, as great as we can conceive, We are merely creatures, and therefore our conceptions are low, and the spirit of the injunction tells us that we should ask great things of our heavenly Father. With our finite powers, we can conceive of Him “who is able to do for us abundantly above all that we can ask or think.” Let the request be ever so great, He can grant it. In your petitions to Him, therefore, “open thy mouth wide,” ask for things as great as you can conceive.

Another thing we are to understand by this language is, we are to expect those great things for which we ask. We are required to ask believingly in expectation that He will give the things which we ask.

The spirit of this injunction also means that we are to attempt to accomplish great things for God. We are to ask earnestly, to ask largely, to ask perseveringly in order

that we may honour and glorify Him. Here, I might add, we are to understand that all our petitions must be addressed in the name of Christ from right motives.

II. WHAT IT IMPLIES

The injunction “open thy mouth wide” is followed by the promise “and I will fill it.”

This language implies that God is interested in us. What would motivate Him to say this to us if He were not interested in us? Why should He exhort us to open our mouths wide and ask of Him great things if He had no interest in us? This language must surely imply that for some reason or other He has great interest in His Church, and, of course, in each individual composing that Church.

It implies that He is interested in those things He requires us to do. He is interested in giving us the great things which He has promised, and in our possessing them to enable us to do what He requires of us.

GOD’S FULL PROVISION

God has made provision for us in every situation. He does not require great things of His people without promising the grace to help them perform that which He requires of them. But He does require many and great things of His people. He requires them to go forth to the conquest of the world, and many other things He requires of them in the various relations that they sustain to the world and to society.

Now, you must not complain that you can not accomplish what is required of you, that you can not do this or that because of your littleness or insufficiency. For God says, open your mouth wide for ability to do His will and He will fill it. He will enable you to do what is required of you. I say, then, that this language implies His interest in us personally, and that He is greatly interested in giving us the things for which we ask. He is quite able out of His fullness to supply all our need, to give us everything we want to enable us to accomplish everything He requires of us.

This language is addressed to different classes of individuals who maintain particular relations in life regarding special and particular circumstances. For example, it is addressed to local authorities, ministers, parents, and private Christians. Whatever the circumstances, this language relates to your particular needs: “open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.”

It is of great importance for everyone to understand that God is interested in each individual. He takes all things into account. He placed us in our various relations; therefore, He must be interested in us. He is able to make His grace sufficient to enable us to do all that is required of us so we may honour and glorify His name. People can never be too well assured of this: “I am Jehovah, thy God.” What is implied in that? “Thy God.” “Open thy mouth wide,” therefore, “and I will fill it.” These words apply to every individual in all the relations of life.

Now, think of what your relations are. Think of your circumstances, of your peculiar trials, difficulties and responsibilities, and the duties you are called upon to perform—no matter what they are. Only understand God as addressing you by name—old and young,

rich and poor, influential or otherwise-no matter, only understand God as saying to you, "I am Jehovah, thy God: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." He is interested in your maintaining these responsibilities in a manner worthy of Him, as being His children.

I have often thought of the magnitude of unbelief. The unbelief of many is so great that they entirely overlook the secret depths of meaning that the promises of God contain, and they stumble at some of the plainest things in the Bible.

Suppose the King of England should send his son to travel on the Continent or in America, and should say to him, "Now, son, you are going among strangers, so remember your great responsibilities: you are my son, and you are my representative. When the people see you they will form an opinion of me, and they will estimate my character very much by yours, as a natural consequence. Now, remember, wherever you are, that the eyes of the people are upon you and my honour is concerned in your behaviour. I have great interest in you; first, because you are my son; and second, because you are to be my representative among those who do not know me personally. I am, therefore, greatly concerned that you should not misrepresent me. For particular and weighty reasons, therefore, I want you to conduct yourself like a prince, and that you may do so, you shall always have the means. Remember never to exercise any kind of economy that will disgrace your father and the nation you represent. Draw upon me liberally. Of course, you will not squander needlessly upon your lusts, for such conduct would disgrace yourself and dishonour me: but what you want for the purpose of representing fully the Sovereign of England you can have. Draw largely; always remember this."

Now observe, God has placed His people here in a world of strangers to Him. He has placed them in various relations. He has admonished them to remember that they are His children and they are also His representatives in this world. God says to them, "I have placed you in these relations that you may honour me. I love you as my own children. I have given my Son to redeem you, and thus I have proved my personal regard for you. I always desire that you should walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith you are called. Remember, you are my representatives in the midst of a rebellious world; therefore, 'let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.'"

God's own interest in us leads Him to tell us to ask largely of Him. His intrinsic regard for us as our Father, as His redeemed children, is very great. Indeed, in every point of view,

He has the deepest interest in us. That we may not dishonour Him, He tells us He will give us grace to meet all our responsibilities and discharge our duties. "Open your mouths wide," He says, "and I will fill them." "I will 'supply all your needs.' I am glad to do it. I shall delight to do it. I am interested in doing it."

Now, don't you ever forget this. Ask largely enough, ask confidently enough, and ask perseveringly enough to meet all your needs. I suppose that no one is disposed to call in question the truth of any of these principles.

These words, “open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it,” imply that provision is made to supply our needs, and that God’s capability is so great that He does not fear that we shall need anything, or be able to conceive of anything, beyond His power to grant. Hence, He tells us that His grace is sufficient for us. Observe, He does not caution us about asking too much, but He tells us here, as in many other parts of the Bible, to make our requests unlimited: “Ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” Of course it means “what you will” for a right reason, not for a selfish and improper reason.

We are not restricted at all in Him. It is not intended that we should hesitate to accomplish anything which He requires of us. We are not restricted in Him, for He says, “open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” In any of the circumstances or relations in which we may ever be placed, or whatever we may be called upon to accomplish, we are never to regard ourselves as restricted in Him.

If He requires His people to go forth to the conquest of the world, they are abundantly able to take possession of the land. We are to have confidence in Him, and to take possession of it in His name and in His strength. If He tells us to compass the city and blow with the ram’s horns, the walls of Jericho shall surely tumble down—there is no mistake about it.

In this injunction and promise is implied that if we fail in anything to perfectly represent or obey Him in every respect, and in all things to be and do what He requires of us, the fault is not His but ours. It is not to be resolved into “the mysterious sovereignty of God,” for the fault is ours. If we fail, it is not because God by any arbitrary sovereignty withheld the power, but because as a matter of fact, in the possession of our liberty we failed to believe and appropriate the promises.

GOD IS HONoured BY BIG REQUESTS

This injunction and promise implies that God considers himself honoured by the largeness of our requests. If we ask but a trifling thing, it shows that we find ourselves either unable or unwilling to expect or believe any great thing of Him. What does it imply when people ask small favours of God? I know very well what people say—they are so unworthy that they can not expect to get any great things in answer to their poor requests. But is this real humility, or is it a voluntary humility? Is it a commendable state of mind? “Our prayers are so poor, are so unworthy, that we can not expect to receive much in answer to them; therefore, we have not confidence enough to ask great things, and so we only ask for small things that we may without presumption expect to receive.” Is this a right disposition of mind? This is that voluntary humility which God denounces: it is self-righteousness. What state of mind must that individual be in, who, instead of measuring his requests by the greatness of God’s mercies, the greatness of His promises and the largeness of His heart, shall measure them by his own worthiness or unworthiness? Why, the fact is, if an individual will measure his requests by such a standard, he will ask nothing better than hell, and he may expect nothing better. This is applicable to all men in all ages, if they make themselves the standard of their requests. But if we are to rely upon God’s promises, God’s faithfulness, God’s abounding grace in Christ Jesus and God’s eternal love, then there are infinite blessings in store for His people, which the goodness of His heart is trying to force upon them. Then, pray, what has our great unworthiness to do, only to

commend us to God's grace and mercy? Whenever, therefore, we ask great things of God, and expect great things from Him, we honour Him, inasmuch as we say, "Lord, although we are infinitely unholy and unworthy of thy blessings, yet we judge not of what thou art willing to give us, measured by our unworthiness, but by thine own wonderful love to the world as shown in the gift of thine own and well-beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we will not ask small things of so great a God. We will ask great things because it is in thine heart to give them, and thou findest it more blessed to give than we do to receive." Now, it is by this sort of confidence that we honour God.

Some ask scantily, sparingly, for fear of overtaxing or over burdening God. What a mean, low, and contemptible view this is of God! Suppose the prince, whom we referred to, had been very sparing in drawing upon his father's accounts. Suppose that he drew only five or ten dollars at a time. The strangers among whom he was living would have noticed it. They would have said, "What can it mean? Why does he not draw more? How is he so poor? Is his father so miserly or so poor?" Thus dishonour would be brought upon his father and his country because the prince drew so sparingly when he might have had plenty.

Now, God has sent His children to this land, and He has told them that they are the "light of the world," the "salt of the earth," a "city that is set upon a hill." And He says, "Let your light shine"; show yourselves worthy of your heavenly Father. Now, suppose that from a lack of confidence, or for some other reason, they draw very sparingly. Everybody will see that they get but little from God in answer to prayer. A miserable, lean, famishing supply is all they get from their heavenly Father. There is but a slight spiritual distinction between them and the world in which they live; they have so little grace, so little faith, so little of anything that one might suppose God would surely provide for His children. Is this honourable to God? What, profess to be children of God and never realise your high distinction! Living in a world of rebels, having no more grace than you have, you never thought of the dishonour you bring upon God. What do you think of your Father? Do you think that God your Father is satisfied? To see you, people would think you had no Father, that you were poor orphans. And yet God says, "'open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it'; ask of Me such things as you need. Why, then, do you go about in such a miserable condition? Why live at such a dying rate, always in doubt, darkness and trouble? Do you not know that I am the Lord your God, and that if you open your mouth wide, I will fill it?"

Now, brethren, is not this true? Is this some newfangled doctrine not taught in the Bible? Or is it true that professing Christians generally have infinitely misconceived this matter, not understanding what God requires of them, or that they have dishonoured Him in the highest degree by such conduct. They the light of the world! Why, their lamps are gone out! They can not get any oil; and if they could, they have no money to buy it. Why is your lamp gone out? Has God your Father failed to send you a remittance? At all events, the lamp's gone out and left you in obscure darkness-a worldly spirit has come over you. What is the matter? You have been going by little and little till you have lost almost all confidence in God, and scarcely expect to receive anything from Him in answer to your prayers.

I don't know how it is with you, but I know that the great mass of professing Christians are in this miserably low state. They seem neither to know that they dishonour God by their conduct, nor that God is ready and willing to give them abundance of grace if they will believingly seek for it.

Of course, if God considers himself honoured by the largeness of our requests, it must be upon the condition that we really have confidence in Him, expecting to receive those things for which we ask. If we should ask great things in words but not mean what we ask, or if we do not expect to receive answers to our petitions, we dishonour God by mocking Him. Always observe and remember this: a man who really expects great things from God and asks of God in faith with right motives will receive them. Those who honour God, God will honour.

God regards himself as honoured by everything we accomplish in His name: by our asking great things of Him, and by our attempting great things in His name.

GOD IS DISHONOURED BY FEEBLE REQUESTS

Suppose a man goes forth in the name of the Lord Jesus to carry the Gospel to those who are in darkness, believing what Jesus has said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Suppose that in this confidence he attempts great things, and aims at the conquest of cities and nations. The greater his aims in God's name and strength, so much the greater is the honour that God receives. He goes forth relying on God, as God's servant, as God's child, to accomplish great things in His name and strength. God considers himself honoured by this. God considers himself honoured by the high attainments of His children and dishonoured by their low attainments. He is honoured in the fact that their graces so shine forth that it shall be seen by all around that they have partaken largely of His Spirit.

Exalted piety is honourable to God. Manifestations of great grace and spirituality of mind honour God. He is greatly honoured by the fruits of righteousness His people bring forth. Christ himself says, "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bring forth much fruit." Ministers should be greatly fruitful. They should bring forth the fruits of the Spirit in their tempers, in their lives, in the strength of their faith and labours of love. Can you doubt that God has great interest in these things? Indeed His great desire, that you should bring forth fruit to His glory, is shown in the fact that He says, "open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

And it must imply, also, that He is greatly dishonoured by the opposite of this. Professing Christians who have but little faith make but feeble efforts, and have but very little to distinguish them from the world around them. Nothing can be more offensive to God than for His professed servants to have so little confidence in Him that they ask sparingly to receive sparingly. It must be admitted, I suppose, that the conceptions of the general population of Christians are very low-they expect but small things from God. But this is dishonourable to God, as I have said, and He is endeavouring by every possible means to encourage our faith. At one time He will go into the nursery, where the mother is with her children, and say, "Mother, if thy son should ask for bread, would you give him a stone? or if he should ask a fish, would you give him a serpent? or if he should ask an egg, would you give him a scorpion to sting him to death?" The mother is surprised, and can scarcely contain herself. "Well," He

says, "I did not suppose you would do so; but if these things would be far from you-if you would by no means do them, and feel indignant at the bare suggestion of the possibility of such a thing, 'how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?'" "How much?" Why, as much as He is better than you are.

A parent has no higher happiness than to give his little ones what they ask for if it is for their good. A father or a mother purchases some dainty thing; they can hardly bear to taste it themselves-the children must have it. "If ye, then, being evil"- compared with God, infinitely evil-"know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give?" Oranges, sweets, candy? No; "the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." That is the great blessing which you need. Oh, if we could only have more of the Spirit!

Christians live as if God had but little of the Holy Spirit to give. But is this the representation of the Scriptures? No, indeed; but infinitely the reverse of this. Some professing Christians live like spiritual skeletons, and, if they are reproved for it, they say, "Oh, we are dependent on the Holy Spirit." Indeed, and is that the reason you are so much like the world? Why you do not prevail with God to convert your children, and the clerks and people around you? Grieve not the Holy Spirit with such excuses; seek, and ye shall find. God is infinitely more ready to give you His Holy Spirit than you are to give good gifts to your own children.

When God exhorts His people to open their mouths wide, and promises to fill them, we are to understand that He seeks in them a clear medium through which to communicate His blessings to those around them. This is a natural law of the divine economy. If you are parents and have unconverted children, or have those around you unconverted, God seeks to make you an agent by which He can communicate the blessings of salvation to them.

When God thus urges people to open their mouths wide in order that He may fill them, we are to understand that His heart is very much set upon their having the things which He is seeking to give them. He takes the highest interest in their having these things-a greater interest than they do themselves. He restrains not His gift at all; the infinite fountain of His love and blessing flows everlastingly, so that every empty vessel may be filled; and, when they are all full, this living stream still flows on forever.

We must not be afraid of asking too much. When we seek a favour from a finite being, we might ask so much as to be thought unreasonable; but, when we come to an infinite being, we can not ask too largely. Oh, brethren, always remember that.

III. WHAT ITS RELATIONSHIP IS TO OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

We are entirely without excuse to God for not being and doing what would in the highest degree satisfy His divine mind. We are not restricted in Him, but in ourselves.

We are not only without excuse to God, but we are cruel to ourselves. How cruel a man would be to himself if he starved himself to death in the midst of plenty, of which he might freely partake. Now, what excuse can a Christian have for all his doubts, fears, darkness's and perplexities, and how cruel he is to himself when such marvellous provision is made to set the Christian free from all such unhappy experiences. Do we

live under such circumstances, and yet have a life of complaining? Indeed! And is it a law of God's house that His children almost starve? Is it a rule of God's house that His children should not have grace enough to lift them above perplexities and unbelief? Does God starve His children to death? "They do all they can; can't they get grace enough," says the devil, "to prevent their living so much like my own servants? So much alike are they, indeed, that nobody can distinguish them from my children!" Dear children, is there not an infinite mistake here? Are we not dishonouring God if we do not avail ourselves of the great things which God has provided us?

It is cruelty to the world also. God has said, "Go forth and conquer the world: disciple all nations." Has He said this to His people, and do they slumber, do they hesitate? What is the matter, brethren? Are not the words, "Come over and help us," borne on the four winds of heaven? "Come over into Macedonia and help us"; send us missionaries, send us Bibles, send us tracts, send us the Gospel? And is the Church unable to do it? What is the matter? Do let me ask, is there not something entirely wrong here? Does God require His people to make brick without straw? Has the world any right to expect the gospel of salvation to be sent to them by the Church? Brethren, consider!

What cruelty it is to those around us and those who sustain relations to us. We have such a promise in the Bible, yet our children remain unconverted! Think of it!

If Christians would but avail themselves of all the blessings which God has provided and really become filled with the Spirit, what do you suppose would be the result? Let me ask this question, "Suppose every Christian in your city should really comply with the appeal and be filled with the Holy Spirit, what do you suppose would be the natural effect upon the populace? Suppose every Christian were to open His mouth wide, and should receive the Holy Spirit, do you not believe that in one year a very great change would occur in the city, so that you would scarcely know it?" I have not the least doubt that more good would be done than has been done before in your city. If one church could be thoroughly awakened, another and another would follow, till the whole city would be aroused and every chapel would be filled with devout inquirers after salvation. This has been the case frequently in American cities; and the like may occur in any city if Christians are but thoroughly alive to their duties and responsibilities. If every Christian in your city would make up his mind to take hold of the promise of God, and thus come into deep sympathy and fellowship with Him, the effect would be astonishing. Like the lamps of the city, Christians are scattered over it so they may give light to the multitudes around them; but if they are not lighted up, the purpose for which they were intended is not accomplished. Let every Christian in your city be filled with the Holy Spirit, and what would be the result? Your city would move! Your state would move! America would move! Europe would move! Asia would move! The world would move!

Now, brethren, does this appear extravagant? If so, it is because you do not consider the power of the promises of God and what the churches are able to effect in His name. The guilt and the weakness of the Church is her unbelief. This is so great that she does not expect to do much. We must now conclude with a few remarks.

REMARKS

Many people so confound faith with sight that they are ready to say, "If God should make windows in heaven, then might this thing be." A great many people have no faith except in connection with sight: give them the naked promise and they can not believe it; they must have something they can see. Few individuals can walk by faith. When they see a thing accomplished, they think they have strong faith; but only let this appearance be put out of sight and their faith is gone again. Now, what a Christian ought to be able to do is this: take God's promises and anchor right down upon them without waiting to see anything; because, somebody must believe simply on the strength of God's testimony, somebody must begin by naked faith, or there will be no visible testimony.

God always honours real faith. He is concerned to do so. God often greatly honours the faith of His people. He frequently gives them more than they expect. People will pray for one individual, and God will often honour their faith by not only converting that individual but many others also.

I once knew a man who was sick, and a neighbour of his, an unconverted man, frequently sent from his store things for his comfort. This poor man said to himself, "I can not recompense Mr. Chandler for his kindness, but I will give myself up to pray for him." To the surprise of all the neighbourhood, Mr. Chandler became converted; this he testified before the whole congregation, which had such an effect that a great revival ensued and many souls were brought to God. This poor man gave himself up to pray for one individual, and God honoured his faith by converting many, thus fulfilling the declaration of His Word, that He will "do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think."

Instead of finding that God gives grudgingly and sparingly, He gives abundantly. God always acts worthy of himself. You ask a blessing of God in faith and He says, "Be content, and take a great deal more so that your cup shall run over." The fact is, where but little is attempted, little expected, little will be received; but where little is really obtained, the fault is not with God, but entirely with us.

21. ACCEPTABLE PRAYER

“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” - Matthew 6:10

These words are part of what is commonly called “The Lord’s Prayer,” and it is one of the petitions which our Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples to present to God. I must assume that certain things are admitted by my readers, among them, that you admit that the will of God is perfectly done in heaven, that God is perfectly obeyed there, and that everything is done there perfectly in accordance with His will. This I shall not attempt to prove, but shall take for granted that it is admitted by all my readers. In speaking from the words of our text, I design to call to your attention:

- I. Some of the principal relations in which the will of God may be contemplated.
- II. What is implied in an acceptable offering of this petition to God.
- III. That to be in this state of mind is a present and universal duty.
- IV. The guilt of not being in this state of mind.
- V. This state of mind is a condition of salvation.

I. SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL RELATIONS IN WHICH THE WILL OF GOD MAY BE CONTEMPLATED

Now, observe that God must be a moral agent if He is a virtuous being. This I take to be a universally known truth and conceded-that God’s virtue must be voluntary, that it must consist, substantially, in the same thing in which all virtue consists. If, then, God is a moral agent and a virtuous being, and has an intelligent will, He must live for some good and desirable end. He must exercise His will for some good purpose, and not act at random and without discretion or aim; but that wherever He exercises His agency, it is for some good purpose or end.

We say then, first, that God’s will may be contemplated in relation to the end upon which it is fastened and which it is endeavouring to realise. In this must the virtue of God, and all other moral agents, substantially consist. If God has chosen a worthy and good end, He is a worthy and good being; but if He has chosen an unworthy end, He can not be called a good being; for goodness can not consist in divine substance, irrespective of divine action and will. God’s virtue, then, consists in the attitude of His will.

Now, if I see that God has proposed to himself some great and good end, upon which His heart is set-upon which it was set from all eternity-and that this design and aim is really what it ought to be-what the divine intelligence would point out as an end worthy of being chosen and realised, then I can understand the relation of God’s will and character thus far: that He is pursuing an end well worthy of himself. We are told in His Word that this end is to secure His own glory and the good of the entire universe.

In the second place, the will of God may be contemplated in respect to the means which He uses in order to secure this end. I refer to the government of God: as all that is implied in the movements of the universe that secure the end at which He aims. We may contemplate the will of God as it relates to both physical and moral government: as it relates to the arrangements and order of nature-the physical universe which He has created; and as it relates also to the moral government-rewarding the good, and punishing the guilty.

The will of God also may be contemplated as the will of a sovereign, who exercises sovereignty over His people; not arbitrarily, for which there is no reason, but in that He acts according to His own will without consulting any other being. God's will, then, may be contemplated in relation to His character, His government, the exercise of His providential government in the physical creation; and in respect to all moral agents, prescribing the law and showing how it was to be obeyed, and then punishing those who refuse to obey and rewarding those who do obey. God's will may be regarded as the law of the sovereign, acting according to His own discretion, and aiming at those things which to himself shall seem wise.

II. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN AN ACCEPTABLE OFFERING OF THIS PETITION TO GOD

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Now, doubt less, when our Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples to pray this prayer, He meant something more than that they should just repeat these words. They were intelligent beings and moral agents, and doubtless He intended that they should express the state of their own minds. He would not, therefore, have them understand that they would be regarded as offering acceptable prayer because they offered this mere form. He intended that they should use this language in sincerity of heart, understanding and meaning what they said. I suppose this will not be doubted. Then the question which we have to answer is, "What is the state of mind required in an individual, and which must be implied in his offering such a petition as this to God?"

The acceptable offering of this petition must imply that the petitioner understands what God's will is. I mean this, he must have some knowledge of the true character and will of God. If he has not a true conception of this, he may fall into grievous errors. Suppose an individual should conceive of God as a selfish being. Suppose that he should conceive of God's will as being neither wise nor good; and if with this state of mind, he should pray for God's will to be done in the earth, would he offer an acceptable petition to God? By no means. Then, to be acceptable, he must conceive rightly of what God's will is. He must regard God as a wise and good being. For if God's will was neither wise nor good, people ought not to do His will. Suppose that God's will was neither wise nor good, and yet He should require us to offer this petition, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"-and that there was nothing, neither wise nor good, done in heaven, it could not be our duty, as moral agents, to offer such a petition. The offering of this petition, then, implies that we understand God's will as perfect, both as to its wisdom and goodness.

An acceptable offering of this petition must imply that we have implicit confidence in His will, as being perfectly wise and perfectly good; for if we have not this confidence, we can not honestly and intelligently pray this prayer.

The acceptable offering of such a petition as this implies sincerity of heart. If an individual asks anything of God, he is required to ask it in sincerity. But what is implied in an individual being sincere in asking this of God? It must imply that he really desires God's will should be done, that this petition is in accordance with His will and expressive of the true state of His heart. If it is not so, then the offering of such a petition would be hypocrisy. Of course it follows, secondly, that the state of mind which can sincerely offer this petition to God must be in entire harmony with the will of God, so far as God's will is known. If there is anything in which his will is not conformed to the will of God, he can not offer this petition without base hypocrisy.

The acceptable offering of this petition implies, of course, that we understand and embrace the same end that God embraces; that is, that we really consecrate ourselves to the end for which God lives, and that we sympathise with Him in the end for which He consecrates and exercises all His attributes. If we have not the same end in view that God has, how can we say, "Thy will be done"?

Unless we sympathise with Him in the means that He uses, how can we say, "Thy will be done"?

An acceptable offering of this petition to God also implies a willingness to say and do just what He tells us. If we are not satisfied with the divine conduct in all respects, how can we say, "Thy will be done"? If we are not willing for Him to require of us just what He does; if we have in our hearts any objections to what He does; if we regard His will as exacting and unjust to us, we can never offer this petition acceptably. But suppose that intellectually we admit that His will is not grievous. That is not enough if the heart does not fully consent, for observe this prayer is to be the prayer of the heart.

The acceptable offering of this petition not only implies that we are willing that He should require just what He does, but that He should require it on the condition of all the pains and penalties upon which He does require it.

It implies an entire willingness on our part to obey Him.

How can a person sincerely pray, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," who himself is not willing to do the will of God? If he is not truly and really obedient, to God's will as they are in heaven, so far as he knows His will, how can he offer such a petition as this? If he is resisting God's will on any point and in any form, he can not without gross hypocrisy offer this petition. The offering of this petition implies that we sympathise with the spirit of heaven, that our hearts are really yielded up in most solemn and earnest devotedness to God. For how can people whose wills are not yielded up to the will of God, without being hypocrites, say to God, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"? In heaven, the will of God is perfectly done, universally done; and shall a person acceptably offer such a petition as this if he is not in a state of mind to go the full length of God's will and subscribe heartily to it? It can not be.

Observe, then, that the acceptable offering of this petition must imply present obedience in the heart to God. The will of the petitioner must have been given up to the control of the will of God. His will must be the expression of God's will so far as he knows it, or he can not honestly offer such a petition as this to God. I say that the acceptable petitioner must do the whole of the will of God, so far as it is expressed, in

whatever way it is made known: whether through Christ, through the Spirit, through providential arrangements and occurrences, through the Word of God, through the workings of his own heart and mind, or in whatever other way this will is made known.

The heart that is sincere in offering this petition must really embrace and express the whole of God's will as really and truly as it is embraced and expressed in heaven itself. By this I do not mean to affirm that the will of God is known to the same extent in earth as it is in heaven; but so far as it is known, the petitioner must as really and truly embrace it and obey it as they do in heaven. It is not to be supposed that God's will is fully known upon earth; undoubtedly many things concerning the will of God have not been fully revealed to us, so that we can not understand all the details of His will; but, in so far as we understand it, there will be a willingness to obey it entirely.

The acceptable offering of this petition implies the absence of all selfishness in the mind that offers it. God is not selfish; selfishness is the will set upon itself, regardless of all else. The person who offers this petition can not be selfish. The very petition implies the present absence of selfishness.

An acceptable offering of this petition implies that we really hold ourselves at the divine disposal as honestly and truly as we suppose they do in heaven. Who does not suppose that every being in heaven holds himself at the divine disposal? It must be that every being there considers himself as belonging to God-that to God all his powers are consecrated; and that any indication of the divine will as to how these powers are to be disposed is to be readily adopted and carried out by the agent himself. Who can conceive that there is any hesitation to do the known will of God in any particular?

To sincerely offer such a petition as this to God, there must be an entire consecration of the will and the whole being to Him. A person who offers this petition acceptably must be in such a state of mind as to consider that he has no right to the disposal of himself. He must lay his whole being upon God's altar and hold himself entirely at the divine disposal. The same is true of all he possesses. Who doubts that everything in heaven is held as belonging to God? We know not what things the inhabitants of heaven have in possession, or what their employments are-what they may be employed about, and what instruments they may use to promote the great end that God is intending to realise. But this we know, that whatever they have influence over is all held at the divine disposal. No one in heaven thinks of disposing of anything to promote any selfish interests of his own. Who can believe that anyone there has a separate private interest?

Now, how should we regard our possessions if we are to offer this petition acceptably to God? Why, God's will respects the release of our possessions, our time, our talents, our influence, our character and everything to Him. These must be held at the divine disposal, given to the divine discretion, laid on His altar and left there. No one can offer this petition acceptably to God without doing this. If he would be selfish, and selfishly use anything in the whole world, he is in no state of mind to offer this petition to God. If he is endeavouring to promote his own will, do you suppose he is fit for heaven? Do the inhabitants of the heavenly world act without consulting God, without reference to His will? No, indeed! When people say, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," does not this imply that everything on earth is to be done at the divine disposal, and to be as truly disposed of for God as they are disposed of in heaven? Let

it be understood, then, that he who offers this petition to God must as really design to obey Him, use all his powers and everything that he possesses for His glory, just as they do in heaven. If he has not this deliberate and solemn purpose in his mind, what does he mean by such a petition as this?

The offering of this petition implies that the petitioner is really and truly willing to make sacrifices of any personal ease and comfort for the promotion of God's glory, so far as he understands that he ought. Who doubts that in heaven they are willing to be sent to any part of the universe, or to give up personal ease or anything else for the promotion of the great end for which God is aiming? We are informed in the Bible that "angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who are heirs of salvation." Any moment they may be called to self-denial and arduous labour. Doubtless they are often called, but do they hesitate, do they consider it a hardship? No; because they sympathise with God and with Christ in this great work. They do not hesitate to make any personal sacrifices that are demanded of them. They are perfectly cheerful and happy in it. Now, a person who would say, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," must be willing to make any sacrifice that he knows is to be in accordance with the will of God. If it is plainly a matter of duty for him to do this or that, to go here or there, he must be perfectly willing to comply, or how can he offer this petition?

The state of mind in which this petition can be acceptably offered implies that there is an opposition to sin as real as there is in heaven. I suppose not to the same degree, because we have not the same appreciation of its character that they have; but, in-so-far as it is understood here, the individual that offers this petition is as really opposed to sin as they are in heaven.

An individual who offers this petition acceptably to God must have as real a sympathy with all that God has as they have in heaven. In heaven they doubtless sympathise with all that is good, so the individual who offers sincerely this prayer must have intense hatred to all that is wicked, and must deeply sympathise with all that is good. There must be as true a renunciation of self and all selfishness, and as genuine a disposition to please God in every heart that offers this petition, as there is in heaven. I speak not of degree, because I suppose we do not apprehend these things so clearly as they do; but, in-so-far as we understand what God loves, our sympathy must be as real as it is in heaven.

III. TO BE IN THIS STATE OF MIND IS A PRESENT AND UNIVERSAL DUTY

Every person is bound, now, to be in this state of mind. I say every man; not merely Christian ministers and professing Christians, but every moral agent is bound to be in this state.

It is demanded by the nature of things. How can people be released from this obligation? Every person knows that he ought to obey God; he affirms it by an affirmation that is irresistible. Everyone knows that God's will is wise and good. Who ever heard this called in question by anyone who had a true idea of God developed in his mind? Every moral agent admits he is bound to consent that God's will should be done, and that he ought himself to do it.

Every moral agent knows, too, that it is not his duty merely to do this sometime or other, but it is his present duty. He has no right for a moment to resist the divine will. I need not, of course, enlarge upon this part of the subject, because I suppose that these truths need only to be stated to be universally recognised and affirmed to be true, as seen in the light of their own evidence. Are not men so constituted as to have it confirmed by a law of their own nature that they ought to conform to the will of God? They would not be moral agents if they were under no obligation to obey the will of God.

IV. THE GUILT OF NOT BEING IN THIS STATE OF MIND

If an individual is not in this state of mind, he refuses to sympathise with God. If he knows that all God's aims are directed toward an end worthy of the pursuit of God, worthy of the Creator of the universe, and yet he refuses to agree with God in this end, he sets it at naught, he turns his back upon it, though he knows it is good.

If an individual is not in this state of mind, he is unwilling that God should govern the universe, not only in relation to the end that He seeks, but also in the means that He uses. He refuses his consent that God should govern the universe in any shape. The man who will not obey God's law, really rebels against the will of the lawgiver; he actually refuses to consent that God should govern.

Let me say that the individual who is not in this state of mind really refuses in his heart to consent that God should be good. He would not have God do what He is doing. He is unwilling to obey Him. He would rather that God did not require what He does; that He would not do what He does do; and yet these things are implied in the goodness of God and are essential to His goodness. God would not be a good being if he did not require and do just as He does. The individual who is not in this state of mind, then, refuses to consent that God should be a good being-that God should do that which He knows is proper to do. Now just think of this, he rebels against that which constitutes the very goodness of God.

The individual who is not in this state of mind really refuses that God should comply with the necessary conditions of His own happiness; for the necessary conditions of God's happiness must be His virtue. An individual who is unwilling to obey God is unwilling that God should comply with the necessary conditions of His own happiness. The individual who is in this state of mind can not say, "Thy will be done," for he is really at war with the holiness and happiness of God-he is arrayed against both. He is unwilling that God should will as He does. And since holiness belongs to His will and consists in willing as He does will, all God's actions are included in the actions of His will. The individual who is not in harmony with God not only refuses to sympathise with Him, but he also refuses to consecrate himself to the end for which God is consecrated. He arrays himself against God. Yes, he virtually says, "Let God cease to be. Let Him not require what He does. Let Him not pursue the end that He does. Let Him not govern the universe; let not His will be universal law!" He may just as well go one step further and say, "Let God not be happy; let Him be infinitely and eternally miserable." For if God were not holy, who does not know that He would be infinitely unholy? And I tremble to say it, but who does not know that if God were a wicked being, instead of a good being, the workings of His own infinite nature would fill His mind with infinite agony?

Now, observe, what does a man mean when he takes this attitude-that he will not consent to have God's will done, that he will not obey Him, that he is virtually opposed to His being good? Why, if God is not good, what must be the consequences? If He may not will as He does, and require as He does, and do as He does, He must do the opposite! And does not sin imply this-that the sinner really takes this attitude? Yes, it does! People who refuse sincerely to offer this petition are opposed to the holiness and the happiness of God, and would consent to the eternal overthrow and total ruin of God and His whole empire! This is certainly implied in resistance to the will of God.

Let it be understood that no moral agent can be indifferent to the will of God: he must either subscribe to it, or resist it: he must yield himself to it, or array himself against it! And if against it, no thanks to him if there is any particle of good in God's universe; no thanks to any moral agent who can not honestly and sincerely subscribe to this petition. It matters not to him if any being in the universe is either holy or happy! He is opposed to it all! The state of his mind is perfectly opposed to it all, and, were he to have his will, he would annihilate the whole of it, and introduce sin and misery into every part of the universe. How great, then, must be the guilt of an individual who has his will opposed to the will of God. I could expand upon this at large, but must now proceed to my next point.

V. THIS STATE OF MIND IS A CONDITION OF SALVATION

By a condition of salvation, I don't mean that it is the ground upon which sinners will be saved, that they will be saved because of universal and perfect obedience. But I affirm this, that it is a condition in this sense, that without being in this state, salvation is both naturally and governmentally impossible.

It is naturally impossible. Heaven is no place for the person whose will is not in harmony with the will of God. Suppose that he entered there, he would introduce a jarring note. He would introduce discord; heaven would be no place for him.

It is governmentally impossible for him to possess heaven, whose will is not in harmony with the will of God. God is the Governor of the universe. God's will is infinite, and where God is, His will must be the law. In every community there must be some one mind that sways every other, or there will be discord. Some will must give law to the universe. There must be someone whose will is universally confided in as perfect, and that will must be universally performed or there will be jarring, there will be clashing. God, therefore, as Governor of the universe, must be obeyed. The indication of His will must carry all minds with it. Now, to the person who hates God's will, this would be intolerable; therefore, governmentally it is impossible for any person to enter heaven who can not sincerely say, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

REMARKS

I must now conclude by making a few observations. How shocking it must be for people to use the Lord's Prayer as a mere form. Just think of it! While he is living in known sin, an individual offers such a petition to God! What can he mean? What profanity! What blasphemy is involved in it! It makes one's hair stand on end to hear an individual pray in that manner to Jehovah, the heart-searching God.

How shocking it is for some congregations (many of whom, perhaps, are unconverted, ungodly men and women) to make use of such petitions as this, pretending to worship God. Yet how common it is to repeat this prayer as a mere form; and it is often introduced into the nursery, and the children repeat it without being told what is implied in it. Why, no wonder their hearts become hardened. But perhaps someone will say, "If this be so, I will not offer this petition at all." But what petition, I ask, will you offer? For remember that you can offer no petition acceptably unless you offer it sincerely!

For example, let us read over these very petitions. "After this manner, therefore, pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven." What does this imply? Why, the recognition of God's relation as our Father. "Hallowed be thy name." What is implied in that? Why, a similar state of mind as that which I have just pointed out. "Thy kingdom come." What is implied in the offering of that petition? Why, that you have set your heart upon the same end that God has, that your will is to obey His will, that you are consecrated to the interests of His kingdom.

Then follows the petition contained in the text, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." "Give us this day our daily bread." What is implied in that? Why, the recognition of the universal providence of God. "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"; not, as some say, "forgive us our trespasses, and enable us to forgive them which trespass against us"; but "as we forgive them which trespass against us." If you do not forgive the trespasses of others, you pray to God not to forgive you yours. It implies, then, a most forgiving state of mind on your part. I have often been acquainted with the state of mind of certain individuals in respect to others, and I have wondered, when they attempted to pray the Lord's Prayer, that this petition did not choke them. How many people, when they pray this prayer, really pray to God that He would not forgive them at all? For they don't forgive their enemies.

But let us proceed a step. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." What state of mind does this imply? Why, a dread of sin, and an opposition of the heart to it; and a most sincere yearning of soul to be conformed to everything that is good. "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

Now, suppose that any should say, "Why, if this is a true exposition of the Lord's Prayer, I shall never dare to offer it again." And what prayer will you offer? Take any other petition, and does not an acceptable offering of it by you imply that you agree with God, and that you will submit to all His will? Can you expect Him to hear and answer you unless you are in an obedient state of mind? Why, if you expect Him to hear and answer you while you refuse to obey Him, you do not regard the plain declaration of His Word, which says, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."

"Well," some of you say, "if this be true, it is no use for a sinner to pray." What do you mean by that? Of no use for a sinner to pray! Well, of what use can it be for a sinner to lie to God and mock Him? Do you ask me if I mean to prohibit sinners praying? I say, no! But I want to prevent their being hypocrites. Let them pray, but let them cease to be sinners, and submit themselves to the will of God. They should consecrate themselves to God at once. It is their present duty. They need not say, "I will not pray because I am a sinner!" What business have you to be a sinner? "My will is not in a

right state,” you say. But why is it not in a right state? The sinner is bound to pray on pain of eternal death, but he has no right to tell lies to God. He is bound to be sincere and honest with God. And is it difficult for people to be honest and sincere? Is it an impossible thing? For my right hand, I would not discourage any individual from praying; and neither, for my right hand, would I encourage him to pray with a heart wicked and rebellious against God. The truth is, men ought to know that they are shut up by the divine requirements and the affirmations of their own minds to unqualified submission to the will of God upon pain of eternal death.

It is easy to see, from what has been said, that a great many individuals offer the Lord’s Prayer and other prayers, and leave it for others to do the will of God. They pray, “Thy will be done” but they leave it to others to perform this will.

It is easy to see what it is to be truly religious; it is to have the will entirely given up to God. It implies, of course, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and much more of which it is not now my design to discuss, as I must confine my attention to the point before us.

Many people will say that this ought to be the state of their minds, that they ought to offer this prayer in sincerity without solemnly inquiring, “Am I really willing that God’s will should be done? Do I really do it?” But this is implied in an acceptable offering of this petition, that, for the time being, we are in a state in which we really do all we know of our duty. By a necessary law, if the will is right, the outward life will correspond.

There is an amazing degree of carelessness among many people as to what they really say in prayer. They begin, and talk right on, without considering that God requires truth in the inward parts. They often say many things that are not true. They verify what the Lord says, “They did flatter him with their mouths, and they lied unto him with their tongues.”

While individuals are not in this state of mind, there is no true peace. While their wills are not under the control of God’s will, and while they are not devoted to him, what multitudes of things are continually occurring to agonise them and destroy their peace of mind! But when individuals yield up their wills to the will of God, they breathe an atmosphere of love, and live in profound peace and tranquillity.

When people are in this state of mind, and regard everything as an expression in some sense of God’s will, how easily God’s will sits upon them!

Much that is called prayer is really an expression of self- will. I would here refer to a case that occurred some years ago in the western part of the State of New York. A gentleman of high standing, intelligent and influential, became very annoyed by the minister of the congregation where he usually attended, pressing upon his hearers the fact that they were not willing to be Christians. The man to whom I refer insisted that he was willing- had long been willing-to become a Christian. His wife remarked that she had never seen him so irritated before upon any subject.

The minister kept turning that over, and pressing it upon the people that they were not Christians because they were not willing to become Christians. But this man was obstinate in affirming that he knew, for his own part, that he was willing to become a

Christian, and would anybody deny that he knew the state of his own conscience? He went home in this state of mind one evening, and in the morning his mind was so weighed down that he sought relief by going in a place alone to pray. He kneeled down to pray, but found that he could not pray; he could not think of anything that he really wished to say. It occurred to him to say the Lord's Prayer. The moment he opened his mouth to say, "Our Father," he stopped to consider, Do I recognise God as my Father? He hesitated and trembled to say it. "Hallowed be thy name." No, that is not the expression of my heart. "Thy kingdom come" was the next petition, and he said he was conscious he never wanted the kingdom of God to come, that he had never lived to promote it, and was not living now to promote it. Then he came to the next petition, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." He paused for a moment, and the inquiry rushed upon him, How is God's will done in heaven? Am I willing that it should be done in earth? Am I willing to do it myself? As these inquiries came over him, he perceived for the first time what was included in being a Christian. He now saw that to be a Christian implied that the heart should be consecrated to God, that he should fully obey God's will. He felt that he did not do that; that he never had done that; that never, by his own will, had the will of God governed him.

He continued upon his knees, and the perspiration poured down him, because he was in such agony of mind. He now felt what the minister had said was true, and the question came up, Why am I not willing to be a Christian? He felt there was no reason why he should not, and no excuse that he could make for refusing any longer. If he was not willing to do as he ought, he felt he ought to go to hell, and be willing to go and take the consequences-that he ought to be sent there and have no disposition to open his mouth by way of objecting. He himself said, "I gathered up all my soul and energies, and rose up in my strength, and cried at the top of my voice, 'Thy will be done.' I know that my will went with my words; and then so great a calmness came over me that I can never express it, so deep a peace instantly took possession of me. It seemed as if all was changed; my whole soul justified God and took part against itself."

I need not enter into this further; but let me say, dearly beloved, when you go away, can you kneel before your Maker and say, "O my God, let Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven, require just what Thou doest, require of me just what Thou doest; O God, my whole being cries out, Let Thy will be universally done in earth as it is in heaven"? Or can you not say that? You ought to be able to say it, and to be honest in saying it; but if you never have yet, let me ask you to do so at this very moment. If you have never found peace before, you shall know what it is to go to bed in peace for once. You shall know what that peace of God is that passes understanding, and drink of the river of His pleasures. Do not rest until the attitude of your mind is to do all the will of God.