

J.C. Philpot

Sermons

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Strict and Particular Baptists Minister

For 26 years

He held a joint pastorate at Stamford (Lines) and Oakham
(Rutland) Strict and Particular Baptists

Was the Joint editor of the Gospel Standard Magazine, launched
in 1835, with John Mackenzie, till 1849 when he became the sole
editor.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph Charles Philpot (1802 – 1869) was known as “The Seceder”. He resigned from the Church of England in 1835 and became a Strict & Particular Baptist minister.



J C Philpot

While with the Church of England he was a Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford. After becoming a Strict and Particular Baptist he became the Editor of the Gospel Standard magazine and served in that capacity for twenty years.

Educated at Oxford University, he was elected a fellow of Worcester College, and appeared to have a brilliant scholastic career before him. But he was brought into solemn concern spiritually and the Lord led him into the ministry. He first preached in the Established Church at Stadhampton (Oxfordshire). In 1835, however, he was constrained, for the truth's sake, to sever his connection with the Church of England and to resign his curacy and his fellowship. The letter to the provost stating his reasons was published and went into several editions.

The same year, he was baptized by John Warburton at Allington (Wilts). The rest of his life was spent ministering among the Strict Baptists. For 26 years, he held a joint pastorate at Stamford (Lines) and Oakham (Rutland). In addition for over twenty years, he was

editor of “The Gospel Standard”, where many of his sermons first appeared.

“My desire is to exalt the grace of God; to proclaim salvation alone through Jesus Christ; to declare the sinfulness, helplessness and hopelessness of man in a state of nature; to describe the living experience of the children of God in their trials, temptations, sorrows, consolations and blessings.”

J. C. Philpot.

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160 The New and Living Way into the Holiest

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day
Morning,
Oct. 4, 1857

“Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Hebrews 10:19, 20, 21, 22

In the tabernacle erected by Moses in the wilderness, and subsequently in the temple built by Solomon on mount Moriah, at Jerusalem, there was a veil of “blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen,” which ran right across the internal structure, dividing it into two distinct portions, of which the first, viz., that before the veil, was called “the sanctuary,” or “the holy place.” Into this sanctuary, or, as it is called by the Apostle, “the first tabernacle,” (Heb. 9:6,) “the priests,” that is, those of ordinary rank, daily entered, “accomplishing the service of God;” for as it contained the altar of incense, the golden candlestick, and the table of shewbread; and as they burnt incense upon the altar night and morning, trimmed the candlestick daily, and weekly changed the loaves of shew-bread, it was necessary for them to enter it to perform these services. But behind the veil there was a portion so peculiarly sacred, so eminently holy, that it was called “the most holy place,” or “the holy of holies.” This contained “the ark of the covenant, overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot of manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant, and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat.” (Heb. 9:4, 5.) Into this “holy of holies” no one was allowed to enter except the high priest, and he only once a year, on the great

day of atonement, as the Apostle speaks—”But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people.” By these types and figures spiritual instruction was intended to be conveyed; and the veil of which we have spoken was especially meant to set this great truth before the eyes of ancient Israel—that sin had separated man from God; that the Lord dwelt “in the high and holy place” which no man can approach unto; and that “the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.” (Heb. 9:8.) Nor was the instruction intended only for them. It communicates similar lessons of instruction to us. Thus we are instructed thereby that by nature and practice we are separated from God; that there is a veil between him and us; he dwelling in the glory of his own eternal perfections, in his own unapproachable holiness, and we naturally grovelling in sin, carnality, and death. We are also instructed thereby that Jesus Christ, as the great high priest over the house of God, “not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood,” which he shed upon the cross, “entered in once into the holy place,” that is, the immediate presence of God, “having obtained eternal redemption for us.” For in him are all these types and figures accomplished. His human nature is, “a greater and more perfect tabernacle” than that of Moses, for it was “not made with hands.” The figurative mercy-seat on and before which the blood on the great day of atonement was sprinkled, is become a throne of grace on which he sits, and where he rules and reigns until he hath put all enemies under his feet. The high priest, under the law, had to leave the holy of holies and to return to his own place; but Jesus having once ascended up into the heavenly glory, there continues at the right hand of God, until he comes a second time, “without sin unto salvation,” when all his saints shall see him as he is and be changed into his image.

In endeavouring to open up the words of the text, I shall—

I—First, show what it is to have “boldness to enter into the

holiest.”

II.—Secondly, what are the grounds of this boldness, which we shall find to be three:—1, “the blood of Jesus;” 2, the “new and living way which he hath consecrated for us;” and 3, because he himself is “a high priest over the house of God.”

III.—Thirdly, I shall open up the encouraging exhortation which the apostle founds upon this threefold firm and blessed basis. “Let us draw near,” to do which aright needs these four spiritual qualifications, all of which are the fruit of grace and of grace alone:—1, with a true heart; 2, in full assurance of faith; 3, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience; and 4, our bodies washed with pure water.

And may the Lord enable me so to speak that he may grant his blessing to what may fall from my lips this morning!

I.—The “holiest” does not mean here “the holy of holies” of the tabernacle or temple, or any place on earth, but the immediate presence of God in the courts of his heavenly glory. It is called “the holiest,” not only in allusion to the holy of holies, but because there a holy God dwells, in the light of his own sacred perfections, in his own eternal majesty, purity, power, greatness, and glory. Now how can any one, born, as we are, in sin, by nature and practice corrupt to the very core—as the prophet describes us, “with the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint,” full of wounds and bruises and putrifying sores,—how can we, being what we are as sinners, and having any sight or feeling of our lost, ruined condition, venture into the holiest, where angels veil their faces, much less how can we enter therein with boldness? How can boldness become a sinful creature? When Abraham stood up before God pleading for Sodom, he had to take the language of the lowest abasement into his lips, and call himself “dust and ashes;” he had almost to wonder at his presumption in addressing the Majesty of heaven and offering up petitions for that wicked city:—”behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord;” as though it were so great a thing to presume even to draw near to the divine Majesty

and address a word to his sacred clemency. Men generally have no idea of this shrinking with awe and dread from the great God of heaven and earth; and the reason is because they never have had any discovery to their soul of the majesty of God. His holiness has never been revealed to their conscience; his purity, justice, and righteousness have never been seen in the light of his tremendous displeasure and fearful indignation against sin and sinners. They therefore think that any one and every one may draw near unto God without any fear or dread; they think that anybody may come into his presence without any view of the blood of Christ, without any feeling even of their need of that blood; without any faith in the Mediator between God and man. They rush into God’s presence as though they rather did him a favour than received one, and as if he were necessarily pleased with the words of their mouth, because they are so themselves. How little they think that instead of pleasing God by the works of their own hands and their babbling words, they only offend him; that they only add sin to sin; that they not only live a life altogether displeasing unto him, but that their very worship, so called, is displeasing in his eyes, and that, he says to such worshippers—”To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear.” If there be no faith in the worshipper, God will not accept the worship, for “without faith” it is impossible to please him,” and “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”

Now the Lord has to teach us lessons which shall cure us of this presumptuous intrusion into his presence, and before he gives us any spiritual and holy boldness, to convince us in the depth of our conscience of his great and terrible majesty, that we may draw near unto him with reverence and godly fear. He therefore convinces us by his Spirit and grace that in his righteous law he is a “consuming fire;” that he is infinitely just and holy; that we cannot see his face and live; that the first gleam of his tremendous justice would

banish into eternal perdition any who came nigh to his throne in the confidence of their own righteousness. Thus, by imparting light to see and life to feel who and what he is; by applying his holy law in its spirituality and curse, and by giving us to know something inwardly and experimentally of the sin that dwelleth in us, the Lord effectually cuts up and breaks utterly to pieces that presumptuous vain confidence, that false, self-righteous 'religion' in which we by nature are so cradled up. By his own divine and special teaching he gives us to see and feel that we have not only no natural and inherent right to draw near to the throne of his majesty, but that if we do so in presumptuous ignorance or self-righteous confidence, we only incur his displeasure. "I will be sanctified, saith the Lord, in them that come nigh me." He still is what he was at Mount Sinai, when he said, "Let not the priests and the people break through to come up unto the Lord, lest he break forth upon them."

And yet the apostle in the text speaks of "having boldness to enter into the holiest." How is this to be reconciled with what I have been just saying? Thus. All boldness that rests upon any goodness of ours—upon any wisdom, strength, or righteousness of the creature, is stamped with presumption, and is the offspring of ignorance and pride. But a boldness that springs out of a living faith in the blood of the Lamb, and from the work and witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart, is not a vain confidence which God abhors, but a fruit of the Spirit which he approves of and loves. And this leads us to our second point, which was—

II.—To show the grounds on which we may draw near with holy boldness; and these, as laid down by the apostle, are three.

1. The first is the blood of Jesus. The sacrifices under the law, such as that of a lamb without blemish, which was offered morning and evening, and especially the sin offering of which the blood was sprinkled on and before the mercy seat on the great day of atonement, represented the atoning blood of the Son of God. This blood of his pure, spotless humanity was shed for sinners; and,

as being the blood of him who is God's co-equal and co-eternal Son, is of infinite value, for all the merit of Godhead is in it. Its meritorious efficacy can never, therefore, be adequately conceived or expressed, for upon it are stamped all the validity, virtue, and infinite merit of God. When the dear Redeemer was crowned with thorns by the Roman soldiers; when he sweat drops of blood in the garden; when he was scourged before being crucified; and more especially when his hands and feet were torn upon the cross,—he shed his precious blood. That blood came from his pure human body; but Godhead, so to speak, was in every drop. And who can describe, as who can measure, the infinite value of Godhead? To do this, you must be able first to measure God, to fathom infinity, to weigh as in a balance, him who fills all time and all space. When you can accomplish this, then you may find what is the value of the blood of Christ. I wish to dwell specially upon this point, because it is so little seen by the eye of faith that the Godhead of Christ stamped such infinite worth, merit, and validity upon the blood of the manhood. It is this that causes it to be "precious blood," and makes it avail for the cancelling, the blotting out, and the complete putting away of all sin. Until we can see this by the eye of faith, and feel its cleansing power, we can neither see nor feel pardon and salvation through the blood of the Lamb as reaching us: it is to us but common blood, which can neither save nor sanctify. But if you see by the eye of faith Godhead stamped upon the blood of Jesus' pure and spotless humanity, then you see what that blood is as viewed by the eyes of the great and glorious God himself. But let none mistake my meaning: we cannot say it was literally and truly the blood of God, because God has no blood to shed. God has neither parts nor passions, neither sufferings nor sorrows, neither death nor resurrection. But the Son of God has taken into union with his own divine person a nature that could shed blood; that could be sorrowful; that could hunger and thirst; that could suffer and die; and Godhead being united in close and intimate union with that human nature, stamped its own infinite value upon

it. This is the reason why his blood gives a poor, needy, naked, guilty sinner such boldness to enter into the holiest. He looks to the blood, and not to himself. It is with him in a sense as with the angel that passed by in Egypt: he looked to the blood and to nothing else; he saw it sprinkled upon the lintel and door posts; and seeing it sprinkled there, he passed by. There was nothing, so to speak, in the blood itself: it was merely the blood of a lamb. But because God had appointed that there should be value in that blood so sprinkled, the angel passed over that house without executing his commission of death. Had the people sprinkled their own blood on the lintel, the angel would not have passed it by; but being the blood of the Pascal lamb—a lamb of God’s providing—and that blood being sprinkled according to God’s own appointment, the angel looked upon it, and passed away from the house without smiting the first-born. As the angel, then, viewed the blood sprinkled upon the lintel, and owning God’s appointment, recognised the sign; so we, if we have eyes of faith to look to the atoning blood, as the appointed way of access unto God, may have holy boldness to come into the holiest.

Nor will anything satisfy a living soul but coming “into the holiest.” He wants to have communion with God, the holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts. He is not dealing with a God distant and afar off—an idol—a God in whom he has neither faith, nor hope, nor love; who can neither see, nor hear, nor save; a God of his own conception or of some indistinct traditional opinion; but he feels in his very conscience that he is carrying on a sacred and holy intercourse with the God of heaven and earth—the God who has made himself in some measure known to his soul as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. With him he has to do; to him he must come; and with him he must hold holy communion. Before his heart-searching eyes he feels he stands; into his ever-open ears he pours his petitions; to his mercy and pity he appeals; his compassion he craves; his love he seeks; his salvation he longs for; and his presence above all things he earnestly desires. So he must

come into the holiest, for there God dwells; and to come unto God is to come there. The man who thus feels and acts is an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile; one of the true circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh. Others are satisfied with the courts of the house, or with admiring the external building, the painted windows, carved pews, and long-drawn aisles—with the mere worship of God as so much lip service. But the living soul goes beyond all that into the very heart of the sanctuary itself. As the high priest on the day of atonement did not tarry amongst the people in the court, nor with the priests in the holy place, but pressed on, ever pressed on through the thick veil until he got into the holy of holies: so with the saint of God—he does not tarry in the outer court with the profane, nor, in the sanctuary with the professor, so as to be satisfied with seeing God with a veil between. But he must come into that immediate presence of God, where he may see something of his grace, behold something of his glory, feel something of his mercy, and taste something of his power. And this makes him press forward into the holiest.

But he is a sinner. How can he venture nigh? Can God accept a sinner like him? Can he bless him with his presence? shed his love abroad in his heart? manifest his compassion and mercy to his soul? Yes, he can through the blood that has been shed to bring him nigh; blood to wash away his sins, blood to reconcile him to God. For blood having been shed which has eternal validity and infinite value, it ever avails. It has availed for thousands of saints in times past; it avails for thousands of saints now; it will avail for every saint who has yet to come into existence. As the blood of Abel cried from the ground, and ever cried until justice had found against Cain what that blood demanded,—vengeance; so the blood of Christ keeps ever crying for mercy, mercy, mercy upon the family of God. When, then, they get a view of this atoning blood, they find such holy boldness communicated, that they can, upon the strength of that, venture nigh. Though they

cannot approach in themselves, they can approach under the cover of the atoning blood of Christ. As a man must not go by himself into the presence of the Queen uninvited, unIntroduced, but may go when properly ushered in, after the expression of her willingness to receive him; so the soul cannot come nigh to God of itself, but through the Mediator and through atoning blood it may find boldness to come. This is the first ground of our entrance with boldness into the holiest.

2. The second ground is, that Jesus has consecrated “a new and living way through the veil—that is to say, his flesh.” The veil of the temple represented the flesh of Jesus Christ: it was “of cunning work,” which represents how the human nature of Christ was “curiously wrought”—that is, begotten by Divine power in the Virgin’s womb; not as we are generated by natural conception, but generated by supernatural conception, by the immediate influence and spiritual operation of the Holy Ghost upon the flesh of the Virgin Mary. Thus it was “curiously wrought,” as the Psalmist speaks, “in the lowest parts of the earth.” And as the veil consisted of blue, purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen with cherubims worked into its substance, which made it beautiful and glorious; so the flesh of Jesus has beauty and glory in it, because it is pure flesh—not like ours, tainted with sin, mortality, and disease. Daring men have impiously speculated whether Christ could sin. They might as well ask whether God could sin. The body of Christ knew no sin;—it was impossible that it could sin, from its very constitution, and its union with Godhead. And it was equally impossible that it could suffer sickness. There was no disease in the human body of Christ. He was weary, but never sick. Neither was it mortal: that is, there were no seeds of death inherent in it. It was made able to die; but dying only by the voluntary act of the Lord himself, whose own words are—“I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” When the Lord Jesus Christ died upon the cross, the veil was rent in twain, which showed two things: first the rending of the human nature of the Son of God—that as the

veil was rent in the temple, so by his sufferings the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ was torn and rent, and his soul by death severed from his body. Secondly, that heaven was now open; that the holiest was now laid bare for poor sinners to draw near; that God was no longer separated from man; that the holy beams of his gracious countenance were no longer intercepted; but that power and privilege were given to those who believed to enter into the most holy place. The apostle therefore tells us that Jesus has made and consecrated “a new and living way through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” It is a new way; the other was the old way—the way of the old covenant, which had endured for nearly fifteen hundred years, and was now vanishing away. The new way is the way of the new covenant—a way of God’s own eternal devising, but then newly revealed—a way suitable to the new creature—a way ever new in opening grace, and ever new in budding glory; ever new in encouraging poor sinners to come; ever new morning after morning and evening after evening. Thus Jesus, having opened a new way to heaven, and giving us new eyes to see it, new ears to hear of it, and new feet to walk in it, is day by day again and again opening a new way that we may enter through his own rent flesh into the immediate presence of God. You may feel very often cold, stupid, and lifeless. Were you then to make your own state the ground of drawing near, you must ever keep away from the mercy-seat. But Christ having opened the way, it is still ever open; and being ever new, it is adapted to all our ever-recurring wants. Because I am cold, stupid, unfeeling, this does not close the road. My inability does not make the veil close again that has once been rent asunder; nor do my doubtings block up the way. It is ever new and it is ever open. Therefore the apostle adds a “living way;” the other was but a dead way. The priest took the blood of a dead animal; he himself was a dying mortal; the blood was sprinkled upon and before a mercy-seat made by dying hands, where it chilled as it fell and soon dried up into dust. There was therefore no life in it; and it could not communicate what it had not. So it proved with

the sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas: the blood they took in their hands and sprinkled upon the mercy-seat could not save their souls; because it was dead blood. The way in which they went was a dead way, because there was no spiritual life in it, nor any spiritual faith, hope, or love in their souls. Nor was life demanded of the high priests. All that was required was that they should slay the animal, take the blood, and sprinkle it as they were bid. No spiritual service was required. They were indeed types and figures of spiritual things; but as long as the sacrifices were properly offered according to the Mosaic ritual, the law was satisfied. But we have now a living way—not only a way ever new and ever opening up with new beauty and new race, new mercy and new suitability, but a way both living in itself and communicating life. Being a living way, it is adapted to a living soul. But it requires a living faith to tread it; it inspires a living hope as it is trodden; it communicates a living love to him who first opened it, and to all who walk in his footsteps. Nor is there a living grace of the Spirit which is not engaged, as this new and living way is walked in. We may say, therefore, that as faith embraces it, hope enjoys it, and love delights in it, so godly fear reveres it; patience endures the trials that are found in it; prayer and watchfulness are kept alive in it; every internal and external fruit of godliness are found in it; and last and best, the end of it is the salvation of the soul.

3. But the apostle gives us also a third ground of holy boldness: “having a high priest over the house of God.” The high priest under the law had two chief offices to perform: 1, he had first to offer sacrifice; and 2, to intercede for the people. We see this last in the case of Aaron, who, when wrath had gone out from the Lord against the children of Israel, took a censer and put on incense and thus stood between the dead and the living. Both these parts of the priestly office Jesus fulfils. He offered sacrifice when he offered himself—his holy body, and soul, and blood—as an offering for sin. But he ascended up to the most holy place, and took his seat on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Heaven welcomed his

presence; the gates lifted up their heads, and the everlasting doors were lifted up, and the King of glory entered in with a shout of jubilee. There he sits, and there not only reigns and rules as King in Zion, but, as the high priest over the house of God, is ever presenting, not vocal powers, but the merits of his sacrifice and death. As the high priest under the law, on the great day of atonement, entered into the holiest, with both his hands full of sweet incense, which he put on the fire in a censer until the cloud of the smoke covered the ark and the mercy seat; so Jesus, the high priest over the house of God, is filling heaven itself, the courts of eternal bliss, with the merits of his sacrifice and death, which is in fact his intercession. He shed his blood upon earth, but the virtue of that blood he took into heaven. He cried, and groaned, and sweat blood here below; but he took the merit of that crying and groaning and bloody sweat into the immediate presence of God; and there he sits as our great representative. He has taken into the immediate presence of God the very body he wore below, the same human bones, the same human flesh; glorified indeed beyond all conception, but still the same identical substance which he took in the womb of the Virgin, and which hung upon the cross in agony. This is proved beyond all doubt by his words to Thomas after his resurrection:—“Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands: and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side.” This is a fundamental article of our most holy faith—that the man Christ Jesus is now at God’s right hand, a very man—not a shadowy, aerial substance. “There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” God looks at him as such with eyes of intense delight, with ever new approbation and love; and views him as the representative of all that are interested in him: he being the head, the church the members; he the bridegroom, the church the bride; he the great high priest, and the church the house of God. As living for her at the right hand of the Father, he is ever presenting on her behalf the validity of his intercession. The fact, the reality that he is there, is the church’s joy, as it is all her hope and all her boast. “Because I

live, ye shall live also." To him, then, do we direct our prayers; on his glorious person we fix our believing eyes; upon his blood we hang our hope; under his righteousness we ever desire to shelter; to feel his presence, taste his grace, experience his love, and know his power, is what our soul, under divine teaching, is ever longing for. See, then, the grounds of holy boldness for a poor sinner to enter into the holiest. Blood has been shed, which blood has the validity of Godhead stamped upon it. A new and living way has been consecrated, in which a living soul may walk. A great high priest is set over the house of God, who is ever presenting the merits of his intercession. Thus, those who feel their need of him, who cannot live and dare not die without him, whose eyes are upon him and hearts towards him, are encouraged to enter with all holy boldness into the holiest, that they may have communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

III.—And now comes, in our third and last place, the divine exhortation which is grounded upon these blessed realities:—"Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

1. "Let us draw near:" as though he should say—"Let us not keep away. What holds thee back? Is it guilt, fear, bondage, darkness, and death? Why should these things keep thee back? Art thou looking to thine own righteousness to bring thee near?—to thine own goodness, holiness, strength, and power?" What do you believe to be the ground of any poor sinner entering into the holiest? Is self in any shape or form the ground that God has revealed, or faith embraces? Certainly not; for were it so, how could any draw near? And yet all are influenced more or less by these feelings. We cannot indeed well get rid of them. They are part and parcel of ourselves. When we are in darkness, under distress of conscience, or when guilt lies hard and heavy upon the soul, these things do, and must until removed, keep us back. But are we ever to give heed to these enemies of our soul's peace? Are

we never to press through the crowd? How was it with the man who was paralyzed for so many years? He might for ever have lain helpless upon his bed, had he not been brought into the presence of Jesus. How with the woman with the issue of blood? She might for ever have tarried on the skirts of the crowd, a poor, polluted, self-condemned wretch. But she pressed through the crowd, and got to touch the hem of Jesus' garment. So with us. Shall we ever dwell in the outskirts—in the outer court of the temple? Shall we merely walk round Zion's bulwarks and tarry at her doors, or shall we venture into the holiest itself? Shall we, driven out by fear, act like Cain and go out from the presence of the Lord? Or shall we, with all our sins and discouragements, still draw near? The apostle encourages us to come with holy boldness to the throne of grace, and to venture into the presence of the King of kings. Esther would have ruined herself and all her nation had she given way to the weakness of the flesh; but she said—"I will go in to the king, and if I perish I perish." She went in with that resolution. The king held forth the sceptre; Esther touched it, and she and the people were saved. So in grace. Shall we ever keep away through guilt, and sin, and shame? Now the Holy Ghost not only in the word of truth encourages, but he himself from time to time enables us to draw near. And when we draw near under his divine operations, we feel the blessedness of so doing. Liberty is given, access, holy freedom, a spirit of prayer, power to take hold of God, to wrestle for the blessing, and sometimes to agonize with earnest sighs and groans and the energy of one of old:—"I will not let thee go except thou bless me." This is "drawing near."

But the apostle speaks of four things, which are either necessary qualifications, or blessed accompaniments.

1. The first is, I may say, indispensable: "a true heart." If a man has not a true heart, he has not a new heart. If he is not sincere, he is nothing. To be a hypocrite in religion is indeed a fearful thing. Better make no profession than one which does not spring out of some divine operation on the heart, some measure of godly fear in

the soul. It is of no use your drawing near to God except with a true heart. He neither accepts you nor your offering. He searches every secret recess of the soul; no hidden corner escapes his omniscient eye. No idle excuses avail with him, and no hypocritical pretence can deceive him, however it may deceive you. All real religion begins with a true heart, with sincerity and uprightness of spirit before God. A true heart will always bring a sinner before God, with confession of his sinfulness; will always show a man the inward deceitfulness of his fallen nature, and make him long more and more for sincerity and godly simplicity as a gift from God. There are those in the living family who cannot speak of a great and marked experience—who have not many depths to tell of in which they have sunk, or many glorious heights to which they have been raised, who yet have “a true heart,” and sometimes show more sincerity and uprightness before God and man than those of deeper experience—It is not always those who have been most favoured who show most sincerity either in heart or conduct, either in lip or life. Not but that a good experience is very desirable; not but that it is sweet to enjoy the gracious manifestations of the love and mercy of God to the soul. But there are saints of God whom he keeps very low as to any sensible enjoyment of his presence and love, whose conscience he makes and keeps very tender; in whose hearts he works much sincerity; and whose lives he blessedly adorns with the fruits of righteousness. There are those in the professing church who adorn the doctrine and those who disgrace it; those who will live upon a crust sooner than get into debt, and those who will try to make a show amongst men at any risk or cost; there are those who live and walk in the fear of God, and those whom you would not think to be Christians at all unless they told you in so many words they were so.

2. The second necessary qualification, or at least sweet accompaniment, of drawing near is, the “full assurance of faith”—not necessarily as to personal interest, though that is sweet and blessed. The apostle is not speaking here so much of the

full assurance of faith as regards personal interest, as of the full assurance of faith upon these divine realities. Faith and assurance are the same thing; only assurance is faith blessedly strengthened. We may compare faith to a sapling—an oak, say, taken out of the nursery ground and planted in the park. Assurance we may compare to the same oak grown and strengthened, and has stood many a storm, and enjoyed many a sun, endured a hundred summers and winters. But the assurance of faith spoken of here is rather the strength of faith in and upon these blessed realities—a strong faith in the blood, in the new and living way, and in the great high priest over the house of God; a firm confidence in the blood as able to cleanse, in the new and living way as a suitable way to walk in, and in the high priest over the house of God as in every way acceptable to the soul and adapted to all its wants and woes. Now a man may have flying doubts and fears as to his own personal interest, and yet have a strong assurance of faith in and upon the efficacy of the blood to cleanse, the blessedness of the way to walk in, and the suitability of the Saviour to save; and he may have such a full assurance upon all these as shall encourage him to venture his soul upon that blood, to be daily walking in that new and living way, and to be looking up with a believing eye to that great high priest, and trust body, soul, life, and death into his blessed hand. Nor can I call that man weak in faith who can do this in spite of every doubt and fear.

3. The next thing—as I must not tarry longer upon this point—is to have “our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.” An evil conscience is a guilty conscience—a conscience that testifies evil against the soul; and a guilty conscience is one of the saddest companions a man can carry about with him. It is a companion he would gladly be rid of, but one that is not so easily dismissed. It ever testifies against the poor sinner whose steps it attends: it is ever reminding him of sin committed—of death and judgment—ever telling him that he has transgressed beyond all reach of hope; that his crimes are too great to be forgiven; that he has sinned

against light, conviction, and knowledge; and that such a sinner as he is not to be found amongst the saints of God. Now, his heart is to be sprinkled from this evil conscience. And how? By the application of atoning blood. As the high priest sprinkled blood on and before the mercy-seat, so blood has to be sprinkled upon the heart. And when the blood is revealed and applied, the heart is delivered from the evil conscience; it is put to flight, and speaks evil no more. This application of atoning blood removes bondage, fear, guilt, and trouble. Nor until his heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience can a guilty sinner with any degree of confidence draw near unto God. God seems to repel him. His holiness glistens before his eyes, and all he sees of God is a consuming fire. But if he see and feel the efficacy of atoning blood, and that be sprinkled upon his conscience, and then the evil conscience departs; it is cast out of him; and then he is enabled to draw near unto the holiest.

4. The fourth and last thing necessary is, “the body washed with pure water.” This does not refer to the water of baptism, but to the priests, and especially the high priest, who washed himself, on the day of atonement, with pure water before he put on the holy garments or entered the sanctuary. It, therefore, signifies being sanctified by the Spirit of God, and walking in all holiness and godliness of life. We know it is naturally unbecoming to go into the earthly courts of the Most High in dirty clothes and with unwashed body. It is not becoming the majesty of God, the reverence due to his name, or the day on which we meet, to come here with soiled clothes and unclean hands and faces. Persons may be poor, but they need not be dirty; clothes may be threadbare, but they may be clean. So in a spiritual sense: the body is to be washed with pure water, that is, the life, the conversation, the walk must be in some measure what the body is when washed and cleaned. How uncomely it is to see a professor of religion, as one may say, in all the dirt and filth of his old nature clinging to him; to see him living as the ungodly live, and disgracing his profession by acts of meanness, and those dirty actions which bring with them

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universal contempt. Therefore, the body is to be washed with pure water, and, as well as the soul, is to be sanctified to the honor, service, and glory of God.

These are the things that we are to know something of in our soul’s happy experience. Without them, we seem very far from being what the apostle would have us to be—manifested saints of the most high God. But I must leave the issue in the hands of the Lord. I have this morning laid these things before you: it remains with him to apply and bless them, and make them instructive and edifying, encouraging and comforting. In his hands I leave it; and may he who has the blessing in his own hands be pleased to communicate it to our hearts.

161 The Spirit of Power, of Love, and of a Sound Mind

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord’s Day
Afternoon,

Oct. 4, 1857

*“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power,
and of love, and of a sound mind.”*

2 Timothy 1:7

Every Christian man who is at all acquainted with his own heart is conscious of possessing two distinct sets of feelings. He feels, for instance, that there dwell in him anger, pride, self-righteousness, carnality, worldly-mindedness, with a host of other evils; and that these are neither dying nor dead, but are alive in him to his sorrow; for he has more or less daily reason to groan under their burden, and to feel their miserable power and influence. But on the other hand, so far as light and life are given to him to see and feel, he cannot but be conscious that he possesses another set of feelings, quite distinct—such as faith, hope, love, patience, humility, repentance, godly sorrow for sin, prayerfulness and spirituality of mind, with heavenly affections that often carry his soul upward to God. For though these gracious and divine

feelings may be obscured and buried for a time in clouds of mist and darkness, yet are they again and again revived and brought to light. Now as he is conscious that he possesses those two distinct sets of feelings in his soul, so he has little difficulty in deciding of what nature those feelings are and whence they take their rise. He knows one set of them to be altogether bad, and the other to be altogether good; that one set proceeds wholly from sin and self, and the other wholly and solely from the grace and power of God.

But there are certain feelings in his soul of which he is doubtful what is their source, to what influence he is to ascribe and to whose account he shall place them. For instance, such feelings as guilt of conscience, distress of soul, bondage of spirit, slavish fear, perplexity and darkness, with many exercises that arise in the mind out of trial and temptation—what shall he say of these? What name shall he give them? Are they evil or are they good? Come they from heaven or come they from hell? Do they spring from grace or are they rooted in nature? How can he call them evil when he had them not in a state of nature, and when they seem—if not grace, at least to accompany grace? For he must come to this conclusion, that if he had no religion he would have no such exercises. On the other hand, how can he say that they are good? They are not faith, nor hope, nor love, nor anything like these heavenly graces. They communicate no present enjoyment to his soul, nor do they seem to bring any glory to God. So he does not know what to make of them nor where to place them. Shall he call them good or evil? Shall he put them down to the flesh, or ascribe them to the Spirit? He hangs in uncertainty where he shall place them and what he shall think of them, and still more what he shall think of himself as under their power and influence.

I think the words before us may contribute, with God's help and blessing, to throw a little light upon these perplexing points.

The apostle declares, in the most plain and positive manner—"God hath not given us the spirit of fear." He here lays down, with divine authority, that a certain spirit, which he calls the "spirit of

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fear," God has not given us; and he lays down by its side certain blessings that he says, with the same decisive authority, God has given us. Now what shall we say of anything in the heart which God has not given us? Can we say that it is good, spiritual, heavenly, saving, or divine? We cannot say so, for if "every good and perfect gift cometh from God," then what God has not given us is neither good nor perfect. On the other hand, what shall we say of those things which God has given us—such as "a spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind?" We must say of them that these are blessings indeed—choice gifts from the God of all grace.

I shall endeavour, with God's blessing, in opening up the words of our text, to cast a little light, as the Lord may enable me, upon those feelings which I have been speaking of as so puzzling and perplexing to the child of God, and shall endeavour to trace their source, how they arise, and to what they tend; why they are permitted, what good they bring about; and how, though not from God, they are made still to work for the soul's good. That will form with God's blessing, the first branch of my discourse this afternoon. I shall secondly, as the Lord may enable me, pass on to show what God has really given by his grace to those who fear his name, which I find the apostle sets down under three distinct heads:—"A spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind:" the word "spirit" being carried on from the word "fear."

I.—Fear, as spoken of in Scripture, and as felt in the experience of God's saints, is two-fold: there is a gracious, godly fear, and a slavish, carnal fear. Of gracious fear, we read thus:—"I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me;" that it is "a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death;" and that it is "the beginning of wisdom." In fact, it is, as an old divine has called it, "a grace of the largest import;" for it contains in its bosom all other graces; and is of this peculiar nature, that the more the other graces of the Spirit flourish, the more does this grace flourish likewise. It lives in the closest union with faith; it thrives with a growing hope; flourishes with an increasing love. The more the

Lord appears in his grace, the more does filial fear (for that is its best and truest name) flourish and abound in the soul; the deeper it sinks into the heart, the firmer root it takes; and the firmer the root, the nobler stem it rears, and the larger, more spreading, and more fruitful branches it sends forth on every side. It is not, therefore, of this holy, this filial fear that the Holy Ghost speaks by the pen of Paul, when he declares that God has not given it to us; for the Lord does give us that spirit of fear: it is one of his choicest graces; it is eminently good for him to give and us to receive, as being that grace whereby we are preserved from departing from him. But there is a fear that does not come in the same way from God, which is not a new covenant grace, and yet is in the heart of those who fear God. What does this fear, then, spring from, for it must have some origin? Why, it springs from a sense of guilt, and is found to exist where the grace of God is not. We see it in Adam immediately after the fall. When Adam was in his unfallen condition, he could meet his Creator cheerfully and walk and talk with him as a man talketh with his friend. But when Adam sinned and fell, fear, servile fear, became at once made manifest. He hid himself from the presence of the Lord amongst the trees in the garden. And why did he do this but because he feared to meet him? When Cain slew his brother, this fear fell upon him, for he feared lest every one that found him should slay him. So it was with Saul, when he “fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid because of the words of Samuel;” so it was with Ahab; so with Herod, so with Judas; and so it will be to the end of the world; for to most men Death is the king of terrors. And what is this but a slavish, servile fear? God has not given a fear that hath torment. And such is ever the mark of this slavish spirit of fear.

But not only have such characters as I have alluded to this servile, slavish fear, but the saints of God are also much under its influence; for as they are often under the influence of unbelief, so are they frequently under the influence of this, its bosom friend and partner.

1. But whence springs, what is the source of this kind of fear? It evidently arises from guilt of conscience. Were the conscience not guilty there would be no room for this fear in the heart. A guilty conscience is produced by the law, and therefore the law both generates and feeds this slavish fear. The law is ever telling us to “do and live;” and when it has thus set before us a task to perform which we can never execute, then it begins to curse us for not doing all that it requires, ever saying—“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” Not being able, then, to perform what the law requires, we fall under the wrath that the law reveals, come under the curse that the law thunders out, and thus fall into bondage, darkness, and slavish fear before God.

2. Again: this spirit of slavish fear that God has not given to us is very much mingled with, as, in fact, it is much grounded upon, unbelief. Before our eyes and in our hands is the Gospel; there is Jesus Christ set forth in his blood and righteousness; and there are the promises, all full of mercy, grace, and truth. Here they all are—the table, as it were, spread with delicacies and luxuries. Why not come and eat? Why not approach and feast upon the gospel banquet? Why not sit under the shadow of Jesus with great delight and find his fruit sweet to your taste? Unbelief forbids. Unbelief keeps the soul back. Unbelief says, “It is not spread for you. You have no interest in this precious blood. True it is that it ‘cleanseth from all sin;’ but it does not cleanse you from your sins. You have neither part nor lot in the matter.” Therefore, though you may see the righteousness of Jesus revealed in the word of truth, you cannot get under it; though you see the atoning blood, you cannot feel its application to your conscience; though you behold mercy and grace shining forth in the glorious person of Christ, yet cannot you bring that mercy and grace with divine power into your own soul; and while you cannot obtain pardon and peace, you feel your mind full of unbelief. Now wherever there is the presence and power of unbelief, there will be a spirit of fear, of this slavish, guilty

fear, that holds the soul down in bondage, darkness, and death.

3. But again: this spirit of fear is often very much connected with backsliding and departing from the right ways of the Lord. There is not an individual under the influence of grace who does not more or less backslide in heart, lip, or life; in fact, every step we do not take forward, we really take backward; and every moment we are not enjoying the sweet presence of God, we are living to sin and self. To do this is to backslide. Whenever we cease to come to the Fountain of living waters and begin to hew out for ourselves “cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water”—this is to backslide. We may not be given up to great, grievous, and open backslidings. The Lord may and usually does keep the feet of his saints, and preserves them from the commission of sins that might grievously injure their character, wound the cause, and bring much distress upon their own souls. But apart from this, all do more or less wander or backslide in their feelings from God. A sense of this produces guilt of conscience; and from this guilt comes slavish fear.

4. But again; worldliness of mind, being too much occupied in business, or unduly carried away with the cares and anxieties of life, producing a neglect of seeking the Lord’s face and calling upon his name, and getting as a necessary consequence into a cold, lifeless, stupid state of soul, when all the life and power of godliness seem for a time buried and lost—all these things, as they produce guilt of conscience, so they open the door for this spirit of slavish fear. In this state there is little or no access to God, the Bible is a sealed book, the company of God’s saints little sought, the Lord himself much forsaken, his presence seldom felt, and his love rarely or scarcely ever shed abroad. Many of the saints of God seem to go on for much of their lives under the continual influence of this spirit of fear, and rarely feel any enjoyment of the things of God. And so they go on sometimes year after year without any liberty, sweetness, or spiritual consolation; pressed and kept down by the slavish fear that works in them, and brings forth fruit unto death.

Now God has not given us this spirit of fear. It does not proceed from his grace. It is not the fruit of the Spirit. It is not wrought by his own divine hand in the soul. And yet though it is not a grace or a gift, the Lord in a wonderful way over-rules it and makes it work for spiritual good. It is the same with this as with some other kindred feelings. Who can say that he has not derived benefit from guilt of conscience? What made you first pray—seek the Lord’s face—cry for mercy through a Saviour’s blood? Guilt of conscience. What made you first come to hear the gospel, or at least receive the truth contained in it as suitable to your wants and woes? What made you mourn and sigh in secret, and hang down your head overwhelmed with gloom and trouble? What made life a burden to you, what stripped the world of all its fancied charms, dissolved all its magic, and showed you in its true colours what this scene was and what happiness it could give? Guilt of conscience. What kept you from resting upon a name to live—on an empty profession—on a mere doctrinal acquaintance with the truth? What made you long for something that you never had felt, experienced, tested, or known? What made you feel dissatisfied with all your own experience and everything that others seemed so well satisfied with? Why was there in your mind a secret condemnation of the whole of your religion, first and last? Why were you afraid at times that you were a hypocrite, and had been deceiving others, or were deceived yourself? And why did you feel miserable, and wretched, so that you thought none could be burdened like you? Guilt of conscience. What, too, made you to give the Lord no rest till he began to appear in love and mercy to your soul, and what made you ply him with his own promises and come to the throne of grace with earnest desires that he would show mercy to you? Why guilt of conscience. So you see that guilt of conscience, though it is the parent of this slavish fear, yet does produce in the hands of God good effects; and you have had the evidence of it in your own hearts.

In the same way, servile fear, though it makes a man who

is under its influence very wretched and miserable, debars him of much comfort and peace, and robs him of much that other Christians seem to enjoy, yet has this good effect—it keeps him from false liberty. There is a presumptuous liberty, much of it in our day—a liberty God never gave and which he will never own—a liberty of the flesh, arising out of a mere notional and doctrinal acquaintance with God’s truth. Now servile fear, though it produces bondage and darkness will keep the man who is under its influence from taking hold of this presumptuous liberty, because false liberty and slavish fear can never reign and rule together in the heart. One must go down before the other. Either presumptuous liberty will turn slavish fear out of the house, or slavish fear will be the death of presumptuous liberty. They cannot both dwell as friends and brethren in the same heart; they cannot both be masters. If you are under the influence of slavish fear, you cannot be under the influence of presumptuous liberty. If presumptuous liberty rule and reign in your heart, it will never tolerate the presence and power of slavish fear. So that if you have been kept from presumptuous liberty, it may have been in a good measure owing to that wretched fear that has worked such bondage, and darkness, and death in your soul.

And yet the apostle tells us, “God has not given us the spirit of fear.” Then how can we view the spirit of fear as a benefactor or a friend if it does not come from God? Well, do you think God has given you unbelief? Has God given you temptations? Has God given you infidelity? Has God given you darkness of mind? Has God given you bondage of spirit? None of these things God has given you; and yet, in God’s mysterious way, these things are continually over-ruled by his grace and made to work great benefits in the soul. Who sent Job his temptations? Was it God? It was indeed with the permission of God; but they were not sent directly or immediately from his hand. They came from Satan, as we find in the 1st and 2nd chapters. And yet they were made a great blessing to Job. So a spirit of fear—the slavish bondage

that your soul may perhaps even now be under—the fears of death that you may be terrified with—the terrors and apprehensions of eternal wrath—your dread lest you be a hypocrite in the things of God,—God has not revealed these things as mercies and blessings that flow from his gospel, nor has his Spirit wrought them in you by his grace. Yet there they are; and the Lord may and does work by them, and out of this evil bring forth good, as he does out of a thousand other things. Here is this terrible rebellion in India. At present all is dark. The tempest is still roaring, and we cannot see clearly through the storm; but after it has passed away, we may see great good come out of it. We may see England’s power established there as it never was before. We may see idolatry put down to an amazing extent and the devil defeated and outshot with his own bow. I do not say that it will be so. We cannot prophesy in matters of this nature. But if we cannot prophesy as regards temporal things, we may as regards spiritual. You may have had a little India in your own heart. War and fire and massacre may have been going on there; and you may have thought, “What good can ever come out of all this scene of confusion and trouble?” Yet good has already, could you see it, come out of it, and still further good will come out of it; for God’s prerogative is to bring good out of evil. Therefore, though God has not given you by his Spirit and grace the servile fear which the text speaks of, yet there it is; and God may and does work by it and bring good out of it. It is called, I may just remark, “the spirit of fear,” because it is so subtle, so energetic, and so penetrating into all the corners of the heart; this being the character of spirit as opposed to flesh. Flesh is lumpish and heavy, does not easily move; but spirit, like the wind after which it is called, acts and moves everywhere. So the spirit of fear is used to denote that subtle energy and that penetrating activity which servile fear exercises in a man—possessing him, as it were, and piercing into every secret recess and corner, and bringing him under its direct and powerful influence, as the wind acts on the sails of a ship.

II.—But I pass on to consider what I proposed to speak of in the

second place—What God HAS given us. Three things are spoken of in our text, all of which are meant by the apostle to stand in opposition to the spirit of fear. The three blessings that God has given us, and which are direct opposites to the spirit of fear that we have been considering, are—1, Power; 2, Love; and 3, a Sound Mind. These we will view separately.

I. “Power” is the grand distinctive characteristic of the gospel of the grace of God. It is therefore declared to be “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;” and the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of Christ administered here below in and by the gospel, is said to be “not in word but in power.” “I will know,” the apostle says, “not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.” The apostle was very jealous over his own preaching, as he tells us he was with the Corinthians “in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling;” and this was a part of his godly jealousy, lest their faith might not “stand in the power of God.” But you will ask—“What is power?” To answer this question, we may put another—What is power as we usually understand the term? It is some movement, force, or influence, put forth by an agent, whatever that agent be. We speak, for instance, of “water-power.” Running in yonder valley is a stream of water; as this approaches the town, it is penned up and a wheel is put in a certain direction to meet the current. The water now acts upon the wheel; the wheel turns; and we call the moving cause “water-power.” Or we see a locomotive move upon the railway. Our fathers would have stared with astonishment to see a train moving, as it were, of itself. They would have thought it little else than a miracle. We know the cause. We know that steam has been controlled and brought under man’s direction so as to exert a certain power, which power is made manifest in dragging an enormous weight at an enormous velocity. This we call “steam-power.” Now if the water never turned the wheel—if the steam never moved the locomotive, how could we say that there was power in either water or steam? Take the idea into grace. Here before our eyes and in our

hands is the Scripture, the pure word of God. Now unless the word of God act upon a man’s heart as the water acts upon the wheel, or as the steam upon the locomotive, there is nothing done. And that is the case with hundreds and thousands. They read the Scripture or hear the Scripture read, but nothing is done, at least as regards salvation. There is no divine power put forth, and no power being put forth nothing is produced of a divine nature. But God acts by his word upon the hearts of his saints, and he acts with power; for his work is a powerful work, produces powerful effects, and leads to powerful results. This, then, is what God is here said to have given us—“the spirit of power.”

1. We will now, with God’s blessing, examine a little more closely how this power acts; for it is the power of God’s Spirit—the operation of his grace; or, to speak more correctly, it is the power of God himself upon the heart of man. For as the water acts upon the wheel, as the steam acts upon the locomotive, so does God, through the word of his grace, act upon the soul of man. “Of his own will begat he us through the word of truth.” “The word of God is quick and powerful.” “The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.” Let us apply this. Here is a poor guilty sinner, in his own feelings justly condemned to die. Burdened by guilt, he is under the influence of that slavish fear of which I have spoken—for you must take the two in opposition to each other as the apostle places them, power and fear. He cannot believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, or in his own interest in him, though he would fain do so, nor can he lift himself up or out of that sunken state into which he has been cast by guilt of conscience. He trembles at the wrath to come. He fears death and hell; but he cannot deliver himself from the fears that work in his guilty conscience. Now what does this man want? He is helpless and almost hopeless. He therefore wants the Lord to put forth a power in his soul that he himself cannot exercise; and when the Lord is pleased by the word of his grace to put forth this power and to raise up a living faith in that man’s heart, then he can believe. Nor can he believe to any

effectual purpose until the Lord give power; for his faith, if it be genuine faith, is “to stand in the power of God,” and it cannot stand in the power of God unless it first be in the power of God. You must be in a place before you can stand in it. God gives that soul power to believe, and then he does believe; and that is power.

2. But his servile fears have almost kept him down even from hoping that matters would one day be otherwise with him—from hoping in the grace of God. Nor can he, so long as he is in slavish fear, raise up “a good hope through grace” in his soul; for if it come through grace, and he has not any sensible communication of grace, he cannot have a good hope. He may have a hope, but he can hardly be said to have a good hope; and whilst under the influence of slavish fear, he often does not dare to hope. Though he is not in despair he is in despondency; nor can he get beyond a dim and distant hope that his soul may be saved. But when the Lord puts forth power by applying a promise to his soul, or by giving him strength to believe in the Lord Jesus, he raises up a good hope; for grace, that is, the free favour of God, comes into his heart, and then he has power to hope in the Lord of life and glory. He is now enabled to loose the anchor from the bow and to cast it forth into firm holding ground. The anchor was there before, but he had no power to let it go; and thus it could not take hold of the wounds of Jesus or enter within the veil.

3. Nor had he power to love. He would love, but could not. We cannot love the Lord until we know that the Lord loves us; nor can we love him with all our heart and soul until he tells us that he loves us with all his. When he says “I have loved thee with an everlasting love,” and sheds abroad his love in the soul, this gives power to love him. When, too, he sets himself before our eyes in his divine beauty and blessedness, this makes us fall in love with him. For beauty kindles love. It is so often in natural love, and always so in divine.

4. Nor can we submit to God’s will, if that will cross our own. Many a dear saint of God would be reconciled to his heavenly

Father’s will, but cannot, for he feels a rebellious heart; and whilst his heart is full of rebellion there is no power to submit. This power must be given of God; and the Lord sometimes does in rich and tender mercy give it. He has but to speak and it is done; he has but to touch the heart and it softens; he has but to appear and the soul melts at the sight. Thus is power given to submit to God’s will in opposition to our own.

So might I run through the whole list of divine graces, such as a spirit of prayer and supplication, spirituality of mind and heavenliness of affections, fighting against sin and Satan, crucifying the lusts of the flesh, putting off the old man, putting on the new, and with him the whole armour of God, and remaining faithful unto the end. We have no ability to do any of these things, except as God gives us inward power; and this strength he makes perfect in our weakness. When we are come to the end of all our own power, we are only come to the beginning of God’s. When we see an end of all our own perfection, then only do we begin to see the beginning of Christ’s beauty and glory. And when all creature comeliness and all native goodness fade and come to naught, then the beauty and blessedness of the person, work, love, and blood of Jesus begin to open to our admiring view.

II. But I pass on to show the second thing which the apostle tells us God has given us in opposition to the Spirit of fear; and that is the spirit of love. Now love is a grace that may be counterfeited, like all other graces; but to give a real spirit of divine love and affection is as much beyond the power of Satan as it is beyond his will. There is no sweeter or surer mark of being interested in the blood of Jesus than to love him with a pure heart fervently; for we certainly never can truly and spiritually love him unless he has first loved us. This is the express declaration of the Holy Ghost:—“We love him because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). This made Paul say, “Who loved me and gave himself for me.” Nor will our affections ever flow unto his glorious person, blood, and work, until we have had some divine discovery of these blessings to our heart and conscience. We may

try to love him; we may think it our duty to do so, and may be exercised and perplexed in our mind for our want of it; we may be secretly ashamed of our miserable coldness, and may lament our barrenness in this blessed grace. But no power of our own can raise up true love to Jesus and to what he is in himself. The spirit of love and affection to the Lord comes from the power of God put forth, springs immediately from the communications of his grace, and especially from the visitations of Christ to the soul. He always comes with love in his heart and hands, and never departs without leaving love behind him. We read, “Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as the ointment poured forth, therefore the virgins love thee.” When once the ointment is poured forth, the box that held it may be taken away, but the smell of the ointment still remains; as it was in the case of the woman who anointed the Redeemer’s feet, when the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. So wherever Jesus has come in his Spirit and grace, when he departs he still leaves behind the savour of his presence, as the ointment poured forth. If, therefore, the virgins love him because his name is “as ointment poured forth” when he visits them with his presence, they love him no less for the sweetness he leaves behind when he departs. 2. Nor can we love the saints of God except the Lord lay them upon our affections. Our hearts are by nature cold and selfish; we have no knowledge who the saints of God are, nor have we any sympathy with them, any delight in their company, any feeling towards them in their distress, or any union with them in their joy. We must love first him that begat, and then we shall love those who are begotten of him. We love the Master and then we love the servant; we love the head and then we love the members; we love Jesus and then we love those whom Jesus loves and who love him. Thus to love is of grace, God’s special gift, as the text declares; and by this as a sure evidence “we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” You may think yourself a great Christian—you

may boast of your deep experience; but if you do not love the saints of God, there are no present marks of the grace of God being in your heart. And if you love the saints of God, you will manifest it in your words and actions, and will show that you do love them by manifesting that brotherly affection, tenderness, forbearance, and sympathy, without which Christian love is but a name. 3. Nor can you love the Word of God except as it is made precious to your soul. You cannot love the preaching of the gospel unless it be commended to your conscience, unless it is full of sweetness and unction, and fall like dew upon your heart. If the preaching of the gospel bring peace to your soul, fill your heart with sweet and blessed feelings, melt your spirit in humility and love, make Christ precious, dispel your doubts, remove your fears, and shed abroad a little heaven within, you will love it because, as the power of God, it does all this for you. Otherwise you will be cold and indifferent towards it. It will be to you as it is to hundreds—a mere sound of words that neither sanctifies nor saves. So in reading the Scriptures. If you love the Scripture, you will be reading it; if you love the promises, you will be searching how you may find more and more power, sweetness, and life in them. If you love prayer, you will be much in prayer; if you love meditation and secret communion with the Lord, you will get away from everything else that you may enjoy more and more of it. You may know a man by his friends. A man will keep the company he loves. And so you may know a saint of God by the company he keeps, by the books he reads, by the people he loves, and by those fruits of righteousness which alone are found upon the gospel bough.

III. The last thing spoken of in our text as the special gift of God, is the spirit of “a sound mind.” What a mercy it is naturally to have a sound mind! It is one of the greatest temporal blessings that God can bestow upon a man. It is far better than intellect, imagination, poetical gift, or reasoning power. And how wretched it is to have an unsound mind! a mind in the least degree diseased, eccentric, or in any way tainted with those delusive fancies which

mar all comfort and often lead to the worst of consequences. “A sound mind in a sound body,” the heathen used to consider, in one of their proverbs, the greatest blessings their gods could give. But however great be the blessing of a healthy body, a healthy mind as much exceeds it in value as it is superior to it in nature. How you see men ruining themselves every day for want of a sound mind! What extravagance, what folly are they daily committing! What embarrassments they bring upon their families, upon their property, and upon others also—what havoc and ruin from being crazed with some fancy or wild delusion! But the apostle is not here speaking of a sound mind in natural things, because though that is a most valuable temporal gift, it is not spiritual grace: it is a sound mind in the things of God that he joins in union with power and love. And I must say that I look upon this gift from heaven as an inestimable mercy to the church of God. We are often reproached with being fanatics, enthusiasts, and people of a wild imagination, carried and led away by airy flights, without any sobriety of judgments or soundness of mind. I consider that no charge was ever more false or more misdirected. I consider that those of us who know the truth of God by divine teaching are eminently persons of a sound mind eminently free from superstition, fanaticism, enthusiasm, or wild imaginations and delusive fancies. I never had sounder mind in my life than I have at this moment, and I am sure my religion has not made my mind unsound. It has made my mind sound naturally as well as spiritually, for it has cured me of a thousand airy fancies and wild ambitious desires, and given me sobriety in natural things as well as in spiritual. To possess, then, the spirit of a “sound mind” is to have a sound judgment in the things of God—not to be drawn aside by every passing opinion—not to be allured by every novel doctrine—not to be charmed by every fresh device of the wicked one—not to be caught by every one of his flesh-pleasing snares; but to have that sobriety of judgment and holy wisdom in the things of God, with that fixedness of heart upon the Lord Jesus,

and that solid experience of his Spirit and grace, as shall keep us from errors and delusions on the right hand and on the left. Unless we have this spiritual sobriety, this ripe and matured judgment, and this firm establishment in the truth of God, we are almost sure to be drawn aside into some error or other. Satan will somehow deceive us as an angel of light. He will impose upon us some of his heresies and present them to our minds with such plausibility that they shall appear to be in accordance with the scriptures; he will puff us up with pride and presumption; he will draw us off the firm and safe ground of spiritual experience, to entangle us in a maze of confusion and error; he will beguile our minds with some of his subtle deceits, and lead us off that foundation which God has laid in Zion, and upon which all his saints have ever stood; and by working upon our Pharisaical or Antinomian mind, withdraw us away from the glorious truths that all the preachers of righteousness have ever taught. If we have not the spirit of a sound mind, we shall mistake a false experience for a true one—natural feelings for spiritual—the workings of pride and self-righteousness for the workings of the Spirit of God—and the deceits of the devil for the teachings of the Holy Ghost. But where there is a sound mind—and that there ever will be, more or less, where there is spiritual light, divine life, gracious feeling, and a conscience made tender by God’s fear,—there will be a sound faith, a sound hope, a sound love, a sound repentance, and a sound work of grace upon the heart from first to last. To have a sound mind is to have a mind deeply imbued and vitally impregnated with the truth of God; and as that truth is the only really solid and enduring substance under the sun, it follows that those who know it experimentally for themselves are the only persons really possessed of soundness of mind; for they only take right and sound views of all things and all events, natural and spiritual, and have, as the apostle says, “the mind of Christ.”

You see, then, what God has not given, and what he has given. The gospel does not give us slavish fear, bondage, darkness, and

death. The gospel does not preach to us wrath, condemnation, and hell. The gospel does not hold out curses and punishment and misery. This is not the gospel message, the gospel tenor, or the gospel spirit. The law does this, but the gospel does it not. The gospel holds forth and reveals Christ. The gospel proclaims pardon and peace, salvation and deliverance through atoning blood and justifying righteousness. And the gospel when applied to the heart by the Spirit of God, becomes “a spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind.” To possess these three signal blessings is to possess true religion, vital godliness, real spirituality—a religion such as will save the soul from death and hell. To have this made vitally known is to have the religion of Abel, of Enoch, of Noah, of Abraham, of Moses, of David, of all the ancient martyrs, of all the apostles and prophets, and of that innumerable company that John saw in vision, “with palms in their hands,” who had “washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” All these had a religion given them of God; and though they may have had, as we may have had or still have, their servile fears, their slavish doubts, their miserable guilt of conscience, their dark and gloomy hours of bondage, yet they all possessed the “spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind.” And such is ever the effect of God’s grace, as wrought by his own divine power in the heart.

The question for us to ask ourselves is, how far we are partakers of this divine religion? We may have slavish fear, guilt, bondage, darkness, and death. Though these are felt by many a child of God, and by all during different periods of their spiritual life, yet are they not evidences of our being partakers of grace? Have we “the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind?” Have we any reason to believe that God by his grace has wrought anything in our hearts of a saving nature? If we have, it will be proved as such. We shall have the enjoyment here, and to him will be rendered here and hereafter all the praise, honour, and glory due to his glorious and blessed name.

162 Spiritual Union

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord’s Day Morning,
Nov. 15, 1857

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

Ephes. 4:4, 5, 6

In that wondrous prayer which the Lord Jesus Christ, as the great High Priest over the house of God, offered up to his heavenly Father on the eve of his sufferings and death, there is one petition of singular weight and significancy. Pleading for the whole body of his disciples, our blessed Intercessor put up on their behalf this remarkable request, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.” And as if not content with merely expressing this petition once, he repeats it in the subsequent verse: “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.” (John 17:21, 23.) I do not know, in the whole compass of God’s word, a passage of deeper import, and yet, as received by faith, one of greater blessedness. When we look at the incomprehensible, ineffable union which subsists between the Father and the Son as expressed in the words, “As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee,” then to believe that the Church of God is to be one in the Father and in the Son with the same close and mysterious union as exists between these two Persons of the sacred Trinity—the very thought overwhelms us with wonder and amazement.

As it is not my present object to unfold the nature of the union between the Father and the Son I shall content myself with thus simply referring to it. But when we look at the aspect of things generally in this day of great profession, do we see union in the

Church of Christ as a standing, visible fact? At least, do we behold it so manifestly visible as the Lord prayed that it might be, so that the world itself might see and acknowledge it? For he adds, "That the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Who that knows anything of the present state of the Church of God can deny that strife and division are far more its prominent features than love and union; and that even in the most gracious and spiritual churches there is a sad lack of brotherly kindness, tender sympathy, and Christian affection? Instead of bearing each other's burdens, some seem most pleased when they can put an extra load on their brother's back; and others, like the petrel, appear most in their element in a storm, or, like the gull, to feed best when the wave of contention brings most garbage to shore.

How, then, it may be asked, can this prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ for union amongst his people be fulfilled? Is it possible, faith inquires, that any petition of our interceding High Priest should fall to the ground? Did not the Lord himself appeal to his heavenly Father that his prayer must ever prevail, when he said, in all the meekness and confidence of filial love, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I knew that thou hearest me always?" (John 11:41, 42.) Can we then for a moment entertain the suspicion that the blessed Lord could utter a petition which his Father would not hear? Carry such a supposition out, and where will it land you but into open infidelity? We must therefore hold firm and fast by this conclusion, that the petition of Jesus was heard and answered, and that there is, or one day will be, a union between the mystical members of the body of Christ as close and as intimate as that which joins together Father and Son in one mysterious essence. If, then, we are still closely pressed with the inquiry how we can reconcile with this intimate and indissoluble union the strifes and divisions that we see everywhere so prevalent in the Church of God, we may answer that we can reconcile it in these two ways: first, by looking forward to that happy season when the members of the mystical body of Christ will all be brought

together; when he, as the glorious head, and they, as the glorified members, will form one complete harmonious body; when all the jars and divisions of a time-state will utterly cease, and perfect love and perfect holiness will reign for ever and ever. Or we may reconcile it thus: that though there are divisions and contentions in the Church of God, yet that the union of member with member is not really affected thereby; in other words, that their union is so vital and so substantial, that the various differences which exist, and which are deeply to be lamented, do not seriously affect it.

We may see, by way of example, this firmness of union in the very face of evident disunion existing in natural objects. Take, for instance, a tree. Look at a noble oak, as it stands in all its native grandeur in a nobleman's park. How far some of the branches are separated from one another; how others grow across each other; and when the wind roughly blows, how they rub against and chafe each other. A person viewing this angry clashing of bough against bough, might say, "What little union there is between the branches of that tree; for see how instead of mutually supporting each other, half of them are on opposite sides, and those which are closest in connection, as soon as the breeze blows only rub and chafe the bark off one another, and sometimes bring down a very shower of buds and leaves." Yet who would assert that either the mutual distance or the rude blows that they give each other destroy or even impair the substantial union which pervades every branch, as being all united in one common stem? Dead branches tied up into a faggot—emblem of a dead church—would it is true lie more closely together, and would not chafe each other. But who would not prefer the living tree with its clashing boughs to a bundle of dry and withered sticks? Or look at a family, all sprung from the same parents, all bearing the same name, and having a common relationship, not only of birth and blood, but of mutual interest, so that the honour or disgrace of one is to the glory or shame of all, and the benefit or loss of one is to the advantage or injury of all. But fathers and sons, brothers and sisters, are not always united.

Differences arise, family quarrels, which may keep them at times very distant from each other, and not only much mar their happiness from within, but give much occasion to reproach from without. But still, family jars and family quarrels do not destroy the original union which knits them together as sprung from the same common stock, as bearing the same name, and having in the main the same family interests. Or take another case, one of closer union still, that of man and wife, who are one flesh. Though bound together in so close, so intimate, so endearing a tie, they may not always be united on every point; there may be differences of opinion in minor matters where love and affection most reign and there may even be at times between them not that harmony and love which should exist in a relationship so close and so tender. Yet these differences do not affect the reality of the union nor the strength of their mutual love: they are still man and wife, still one flesh, still very fond of each other, though there may be occasional jars and differences which for a time interrupt that union and harmony which should subsist between them. So in the church of God: there are painful divisions in most churches, and much jealousy and suspicion at work beneath, which either grace subdues, or at least they smoulder without bursting into a flame. Yet where the life of God is, and of such only I speak, all these differences do not really affect the substantial union which knits them together as members of the body of Jesus.

But whilst I believe this, I still deeply lament that any difference should separate the living family of God; and I declare before all of you who believe in and love the Lord Jesus Christ that such divisions are very grievous, and that it is the duty and privilege of every Christian man to strive after manifest union with the saints of God, and especially with those amongst whom his lot is cast; that he is bound to lay aside all matters that cause dissension and strife, and to seek, as far as lies in his power, “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” But be not deceived in this matter. It is not easy to talk of love and union when your heart is

full of strife and bitterness. Without tenderness of feeling and real humility of spirit, there is no walking in union with the children of God, for “only by pride cometh contention” (Prov. 13:10); and if you would live with them in peace and affection it is only by walking “worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.” (Eph. 4:1, 2.)

You will perhaps remember that the passage which I have just quoted immediately precedes the words of our text, in which the apostle urges upon believers to endeavour “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” by showing what is the foundation of that union, and how it is not only generated, but how maintained amongst the members of the mystical body of the Lord Jesus.

In opening up these words, therefore, I shall, with God’s blessing, endeavour

I.—First, to show the unity of the body: “There is one body.”

II.—Secondly, what is the foundation and source of this unity, which is no less than the three Persons of the undivided Godhead, as 1, “one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all;” 2, “one Lord,” the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s co-equal and co-eternal Son; and 3, “one Spirit,” that is, the Blessed Spirit. So that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in their separate and several relationships to the Church of God, form the grand foundation, as well as the spiritual source and spring of the union of the mystical body of Christ.

III.—Thirdly, what I may perhaps be allowed to call the cementing bands of this heavenly union, which are “one faith, one hope, and one baptism,” whereby all the living members are spiritually knit together into the blessed enjoyment of mutual peace, harmony, and love.

I.—“There is one body.” This is the body of Christ, as the apostle elsewhere speaks, “Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular” (1 Cor. 12:27); and again, in the chapter before us, “For the edifying of the body of Christ.” (Eph. 4:12.) But the Scripture

speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ having two distinct bodies: one real, the other mystical. Let us take a glance at each, that we may see what is intended here. The Lord Jesus, then, has a real body which he took in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and which the Father had prepared for him, according to those words: "A body hast thou prepared me. Then said I, lo, I come [in the volume of the book it is written of me] to do thy will O God." (Heb. 10:5, 7.) By this body prepared for him, is meant, however, not only the material body, that is, the actual flesh, bones, and blood which the Lord assumed, but the whole of his sacred humanity, consisting of a perfect human body and a perfect human soul, which the Lord Jesus took at one and the same instant into union with his divine Person when he was made flesh for us. This we may call his real body, as distinguished from his mystical body; the actual living body in which during his time-state here below he hungered, thirsted, ate, drank, wept, sweat in the garden drops of blood, agonised upon the cross; and which he offered, together with his soul, as a sacrifice for sin upon the altar of his own divinity when he laid down his precious life at Calvary. This is his real body, which was raised from the dead, wherein he ascended into heaven, and which he now wears—identically the same, though infinitely glorified—at the right hand of the Majesty on high. In this body he will come a second time without sin unto salvation, when, in union with his Deity, it will shine forth with all the wondrous splendour which it now wears on the throne of his glory—a splendour which all shall behold; for "every eye shall see him and they also which pierced him" (Rev. 1:7); but of that surpassing brightness which, while it fills the hearts of his saints with unutterable joy, will so appal the ungodly that they will call upon "the mountains and rocks to fall upon them and hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." (Rev. 6:16.)

But the Lord Jesus has another body, which is usually termed his mystical body. This is the body spoken of in our text, as also

in many other passages; as, for instance, "Not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." (Col. 2:19.) And again, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:22, 23.) The church, then, according to these testimonies, is Christ's mystical body, the members of which consist of all the elect of God, elsewhere spoken of as "the church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." (Heb. 12:23.) But we must bear in mind that as the word "church" is used in two different senses in the New Testament, so it is with the mystical "body" of Christ. It has two distinct significations, meaning, 1, first, the whole collected assembly of the elect; and, 2, secondly, distinct gospel churches in this time-state. I have already named several passages where the body of Christ means, as in our text, the whole collective members, and I will now mention one where a gospel church is called by that term. You will find it 1 Cor. 12., where the apostle opening up the subject of spiritual gifts, shows that they are diversely distributed to the members of the body of Christ, of which a visible church consists. One, he says, is a foot, another a hand, another an eye, another an ear, all of which expressions imply that he is speaking of the different gifts and graces of members of a gospel church, for, ascribing the whole to the goodness and wisdom of God, he says, "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body." Is not this truly applicable to a gospel church in the exercise of the spiritual gifts bestowed upon the various members? One is an eye, having a clear discernment of spiritual things, and able to see almost at a glance where there is a real work of grace and where a mere profession; another is an ear, to "try words, as the mouth tasteth meat" (Job 34:3); another a hand, to minister liberally to the wants of God's saints; another a foot, cheerfully to

toil and and trudge on the errands of the church, to be the least and lowest, and yet the most useful and serviceable. And all these members, however different from one another,—for how widely the eye differs from the ear, the ear from the foot, and the foot from the hand!—yet all are component parts of the same mystical body; all have equal union with Christ, their living Head; each is set by divine appointment and by divine power in its peculiar place to do the work that God has intended, and that as no other member could do.

Whether, then, we view the “one body” spoken of in our text as the collective body of Christ in its aggregate form, as embracing the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, which I think is its meaning, or as a gospel church here below, the force of the words is the same. It is still “one body.” This is its glory and this is its strength; and by this it is distinguished in heaven and in earth from all other societies and assemblies which, compared with the mystical body of Christ, are but ropes of sand or disorderly mobs.

II.—But we will now see what is the foundation and source of the union of which the apostle speaks in our text, when he insists on the unity of the one body. I have already intimated that the foundation of this union is nothing less than the three Persons of the undivided Godhead. This, then, is the point which I have now to open up.

i. This union of the mystical body of Christ rests first, then, on God the Father, according to the words, “There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

Four things are here said of, four blessings ascribed to, the one God and Father of the members of Christ’s mystical body.

1. First, he is “the God and Father of them all.” This constitutes them members of one and the same family; for as in an earthly family, all the children derive their origin from one and the same father, so in a higher sense there is one God and Father of all the family of heaven. As being, then, all his sons and daughters, they

have the same family name, the same family ties, and the same family interests, because they have the same family origin. In this sense, the glorified spirits above, those whom the apostle calls “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:23), are one with the saints still on earth, which made Paul say, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” (Eph. 3:14, 15.) But, as regards those still in the body here below, some in this family are but “babes” in the mother’s lap, only just able to draw the breasts of consolation and feed upon the sincere milk of the work that they may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2); others are “little children” farther advanced in growth, who prattle and lisp of the things of God, and speak with childlike simplicity of the glory of Christ’s kingdom and talk of his power, as they have seen and felt them; others again are “young men,” active and strong in faith and love, full of warmth, energy, and zeal, who fight the Lord’s battles against evil and error, and are often personally and hotly engaged in painful conflicts with the world, the flesh, and the devil, but by faith overcome the wicked one; and others are “fathers,” not merely by age but also by experience, whom the Lord the Spirit has matured and ripened in the things of God, whom he has led through many conflicts, trials, and temptations, and thus established them firmly and soundly in the faith of the gospel. Now though these differ widely in age, gifts, experience, and grace, yet they all are members of the same living family; for there is one God and Father of them all.

2. But this one God and Father of all is said also to be “above all.” How this expression leads our minds to look up to that great and glorious Jehovah who, in the infinity of his Being, is above all men and all circumstances. As the expanse of heaven is above the earth, and above it infinitely, so is the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ above all the passing scenes of this lower creation. As ever visibly before our eyes, earth seems to us a mighty domain. It has its lofty mountains, its deep valleys, its flowing rivers, its umbrageous woods, its waving crops, its green fields, its roaring

sea, its sandy beach; and, all these seem enough and more than enough to fill every eye and heart, as if all creation here began and terminated. But when we look upward on a clear summer night and view the spangled sky, what are all the mere scanty elements of sight and sound which earth yields compared with the blue expanse that arches over all? What are mountains or valleys, seas or rivers, in magnitude, height, or depth, compared with the heavens stretched with their blue vault above all, gemmed with millions of stars, shining forth in all their placid beauty? So God is so infinitely above all men and things, however seemingly great and glorious, that, compared with the infinity of his eternal Being, all earthly distinctions sink into nothing. As in nature the highest mountain is but a grain of sand compared with the blue arch of heaven; so in religion, what are all attainments, gifts, graces, knowledge and experience, compared with the infinite majesty, the ineffable glory, the boundless grace of the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ? And see how this blessed truth that God is “above all” bears upon the point in hand—the unity of the body of Christ. We, to our shame be it spoken, too often quarrel and fight with one another; but all our family differences, even our family jars and quarrels, are as nothing in comparison with the boundless magnitude of God’s care for each, and the infinite love and affection which he bears towards all the members of the mystical body of Jesus. He is “above all” our quarrels, strifes, contentions, jars, jealousies, suspicions, and surmises,—yea, above all our thoughts and ways, words and works: for he sits upon the throne of his Majesty, viewing men as so many grasshoppers under his feet; for, as the prophet so sublimely speaks: “Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.” (Isai. 40:15.) When, then, we look up and see that he is not only the God and Father of all the members of Christ’s mystical body, but “above all” their differences, as well as all their attainments, we should not only love them as his children, but should mutually

bear and forbear with them, as seeing how vain and foolish are all our petty strifes compared with the grace and mercy of God above us and above them.

3. And he is “through all,” for as God he pervades by his Spirit all his living family. As the air may be said to be “through” everything, as rushing through every place with its mighty breath, pervading every spot, entering into the closest room through every crevice and cranny, as well as filling every region on this habitable earth with its influence, presence, and power; so God the Father pervades with his Spirit, presence, and grace, and, if I may use such an expression, with his holy breath, the soul of every one of whom he is the Father. May we not, then, say that in this sense he is “through all” the family of God, not indeed so manifestly, yet not less really, than on the day of Pentecost he was by his Spirit “through all” the apostles, when “suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting?” (Acts 2:2.) If believers are “a habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22); if they are his temple in whom he dwells (2 Cor. 6:16); if he act by them, and speak through them (Mark 13:11); and if this is the peculiar and sole privilege of his children, may not God be said not only to be the Father of them all, and above them all, but also to be through them all?

4. But he is also “in them all” by his manifested indwelling presence, by his shed abroad love, and by taking up his abode in their hearts. “Will God in very deed dwell with men on earth?” asked Solomon in admiring awe. (2 Chron. 6:18.) Yes, he will; he does; for he dwells amongst his saints, as he said of old: “And let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.” (Exodus 25:8.) That sanctuary is Christ; for his sacred humanity is “the true tabernacle which God pitched and not man.” (Heb. 8:2.) Christ dwells in the hearts of his people, as the apostle prays (Eph. 3:17); and God dwells in Christ, as the Lord himself speaks, “I in them and thou in me.” (John 17:23.) Thus as God dwells in Christ, and Christ dwells in his people, it may truly be said that God is “in them

all” by his presence and love. The apostle, therefore, urging union among them, would imply by this, “What are your differences of opinion, your strifes and contentions, compared with this high privilege, this great and glorious blessing?” If there is one God and Father of you all, who is above all, through all, and in you all, does not this call upon you to walk in love and union with each other? If so great, so glorious a Guest dwell in you all, can you, will you, lodge by his side what he so abhors as strife among brethren? If he whose name, whose nature is “love,” live in you, can you not love another when he by his love dwells alike in all your hearts? “What a foundation for union is this! What a perennial spring, ever gushing forth in thoughts, words, and works of the tenderest and warmest Christian affection!

ii. But there is another foundation of the unity of the body of Christ. There is “one Lord.” This one Lord is the blessed Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, who is called again and again in the Scriptures of the New Testament, “our Lord,” and here “one Lord.” The reason why he bears that honoured, that worthy name is not far to seek. He is the Church’s risen Head, to whom she owes implicit submission, and to whom she yields up her obedience as well as her affections, for he sits upon the throne of her heart, swaying every faculty of her soul in willing obedience to his sceptre. He thus becomes our one, our only Lord: “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth (as there be gods many and lords many); but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.” (1 Cor. 8:5, 6.) If he has in any way, then, manifested himself to our souls, has he not a right to every affection of our heart; a claim to every obedience of our willing mind? When the Holy Ghost says to us what he said to the church of God of old, “He is thy Lord; and worship thou him” (Psal. 45:11); we can answer, “Other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.” (Isai. 26:13.) He becomes our Lord when by grace we

listen to and obey his own words: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” (Matt. 11:29.) In bowing to his yoke, we own him as our Lord; for then he becomes our Sovereign, our Head, claiming at our hands not mere lip-service, but all holy obedience to his precepts, for he himself declares: “Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 7:21.)

But the apostle in the text, as urging upon believers Christian union, does it on this ground, that to them there is “one Lord.” Here, then, is another bond of union that knits together the mystical members of the body of Christ, another foundation of mutual affection, another well-spring of brotherly love. If he is my Lord, I submit to him as such; I adore him, worship him, receive him into my heart, seek to know his will and do it. If he is your Lord, you do the same: you seek to know him more and more, to worship him in Spirit and in truth, to reverence his name and word, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight. Then if he is my Lord and your Lord, we serve one common Master; we are bound by one and the same allegiance; we owe him the same holy obedience; we are both seeking to know and to do one will; and we are both striving, or should strive, to please him who has taken his seat upon the throne of our affections. Therefore all divisions and strifes must yield in his presence. What should we think of courtiers quarreling in the presence of the Queen? Every contending voice is hushed in the presence of Majesty. Whatever contention may exist in the antechamber, whatever crowding and crushing there for place or precedence, when they come into the presence of the Sovereign all is quiet and respectful submission. Is it not, or should it not be so, in grace? When we by faith are brought into the presence of our common Lord, to worship him as our risen Head, to serve him as obedient subjects, and to stand before his throne in silent submission to his will, should not every contending breath be hushed? What could be more unseemly than to quarrel in the

very presence of the Lord himself? The disciples, on one occasion, “disputed among themselves who should be greatest;” but it was not in the immediate presence of their Master, and they held their peace for very shame when the Lord asked them the cause of their dispute. (Mark 9:33, 34.) Has he not as our Lord given us a new commandment that we love one another? (John 13:34.) And how can we better show that we obey him than by doing what he bids?

iii. A third grand foundation of Christian union is, that there is “one Spirit.” This one Spirit is the Holy Ghost, by whom all the members of the mystical body are in the first instance awakened from their sleep of death, quickened into spiritual life by divine power, and thus made alive unto God. Every grace and gift which the members of Christ’s mystical body possess they receive from this one Spirit, who thus baptizes them into one body, as the apostle speaks: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12:13.) Thus, though the people of God differ widely in gifts and attainments, and have very different measures of grace, yet they are all made to repent of their sins with godly sorrow by one Spirit; they are all enabled to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God by one Spirit; they are all taught to pray by one Spirit, who, “as the Spirit of grace and supplications,” helps them to pour out their hearts before the throne, to seek the Lord’s face, to call upon his name, and offer up those spiritual sacrifices which are acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Yea, he himself, as their inward Intercessor, “helpeth their infirmities,” and himself “intercedeth for them with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (Rom. 8:26.) No band is or can be so strong as a spiritual union. Change and mutability are stamped upon all mere earthly ties, however strong they for the moment appear. But a spiritual union is for ever. And bear in mind that it is “one Spirit” that knits together into this spiritual and enduring union all the members of Christ’s mystical body who have received life from their covenant Head, and that

he breathes one and the same spirit into every living soul. There are not two spirits in the Church of God—a spirit of love and a spirit of strife; a spirit of union and a spirit of disunion; a spirit of affection and a spirit of enmity; a spirit of peace and a spirit of war; a spirit of humility and a spirit of pride; a spirit of harmony and a spirit of contention. It is but one Spirit, though his operations, at least as regards gifts, are different, for “there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.” (1 Cor. 12:4, 5, 6.) However then these gifts may differ in kind, or grace vary in depth or degree, it is still one Spirit, for “all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will” (1 Cor. 12:11); and it is because it is one Spirit that quickens, animates, influences, pervades, and permeates the whole members of Christ’s mystical body, that they are knit together in the bands of Christian affection and love.

How strong, then, is this spiritual union, how substantial the foundation on which it rests; how full of life and blessedness the overflowing spring whence it takes its rise, and by which it is perpetually and unceasingly fed. When by faith we view the three Persons of the sacred Godhead all uniting to create and cement it, we see Almighty power and eternal love engaged on its behalf. When, then, we look up and see God the Father as the “Father of all” who fear his great name, “above all” by his power and love, “through all” by his Spirit and grace, and “in all” by his indwelling presence: what a bond of union is this! When, again, we look up and see the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God, seated on his throne of grace and glory, and we can call to mind what he was upon earth, and what sorrows he endured for his dear people, that he shed his sacred blood for their sake, endured shame and suffering for their sake; died, rose again, and ascended for their sake; and now reigns and rules as Lord and Sovereign over all, swaying by the sceptre of his grace the heart of every saint: what a foundation of the oneness

of the body as a fact, and of Christian union as a fruit, do we find to subsist in him? When we look up a third time and see the Holy Ghost, the third Person of the glorious Godhead, proceeding from the Father and the Son, and view by faith how he comes down in his gifts, graces, quickenings, enlightenings, teachings, and in his various other operations into the heart of every saint of God, we see what a foundation there is for Christian union there. Thus the oneness of the body of Christ is not a mere floating idea of brain-sick enthusiasts, not a cunningly devised fable of crafty, designing hypocrites as a means of obtaining power or pelf, but a divine reality, whose foundation is nothing less than a Triune God. And Christian union, as a fruit of this antecedent oneness, is not a mere agreement of opinion with a certain sect or party; not a mere assent and consent to the same creed; or even a being bound together in the bond of a visible church, but something spiritual, heavenly, and divine, and therefore in its very nature, and from its very origin, far more substantial and enduring than any earthly tie. Look at mere natural bonds. How soon the closest and tenderest are scattered to the winds! Take that of a young family, all growing up as olive plants round about their parents' table. How pleasing the sight; but how brief the duration. How fair the blossom; how often blighted the fruit. The father, perhaps "dieth," as Job speaks, "in his full strength, when his bones are moistened with marrow" (Job 21:23, 24); the broken-hearted mother follows him to an early grave; one son emigrates to Australia; another settles in a distant part of England; a third is wrecked at sea; a fourth dies prematurely of consumption; the daughters marry and have families of their own. Where now is that happy family once so united in their youthful home? A vision of yesterday, a mournful recollection of the past, as shadowy and as unsubstantial to the survivors as the last night's dream. Or look at the tie of man and wife, the strongest, as well as the closest, sweetest, and tenderest that we can have here below; the fairest relic of Eden, the most lively emblem of the union of Christ and his Church! How soon

that may be snapped in twain by the death of one or the other, and no mourning of the bereaved one can bring the loved object back. And look at earthly friendships how weak their foundation, how frail their tenure! A word, a look, an unjust suspicion, or a lying tale, may for ever separate those who once were bosom friends. And even what are called or supposed to be religious friendships are often rudely rent asunder, and those who once seemed to love each other in the warmest manner become cold and indifferent to each other's interests, if not secret or open enemies; proving that nature not grace, agreement of creed not union of heart, was the foundation of the whole. It is the very nature, the inseparable condition of all earthly ties, to be of a fleeting, vanishing nature; as fleeting as life itself, as vanishing as the creatures of a day, that, like gnats in a sunbeam, sport their noon and die before night. But the bond of which I have been speaking—the oneness of the mystical body of Christ and the spiritual union of the children of God with each other—is so substantial, so abiding, and so indissoluble, because its foundation is not in earth, but in heaven; not in time, but eternity; not in the flesh, but in the spirit; based not on man, but on the very Triune God himself.

If, then, we see this by the eye of faith and believe in our very conscience that these are most certain and blessed truths, should we not seek to realize them in our hearts, and manifest our belief of them by our lips and lives? It is most important, I might say indispensable, for his peace of conscience, that every child of God should realize in his own soul two things: 1, his union with Christ; 2, his union with the people of Christ. Love is the evidence by which both are realized. By love shed abroad in his heart, he realizes the blessedness of knowing that he is one with Christ by eternal ties, and by a direct and spiritual relationship; and by love he realizes his union with the members of Christ's mystical body by knowing for himself the truth of those heavenly words, "We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." (1 John 3:14.)

He who knows nothing of love to God knows nothing of God, as holy John speaks, “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.” (1 John 4:8.) And he that loves not the people of God has no evidence of spiritual life; for, as the same inspired testimony declares, “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” (1 John 3:14.)

III.—But besides the foundation on which the actual oneness of Christ’s mystical body, and spiritual union as the fruit of it rest, there are uniting bonds called by the apostle in another place “joints and bands,” which, as so many internal ligaments, so many living and active joints, knit and bind the whole body together. (Col. 2:19.) If we view Christ’s mystical body as a temple, we may call them cementing bands, not external to the building, as props and buttresses to shore up a falling structure, or as iron girders driven round it to repair internal decay, but like bond work built up together with the edifice, and strengthening every part alike. These internal ligaments or cementing bands are three, and the firmness of their union, as well as the strength of their cement, are derived from their spiritual oneness in every member: “one faith, one hope, one baptism.”

1. The first connecting ligament or cementing band is “one faith.” This is the grand distinguishing mark of a Christian. By it he is made and called a believer. A man called upon me some time ago to sell me a book, the title of which was “The Book of Faiths.” In this book he had classified all the faiths of all the world. Heathen, Mahometan, Jew, Papist, Protestant, all were down in his book. This is just the world’s book, the very spirit of Pope’s Universal Prayer—

“Jehovah, Jove, or Lord;”

as if so many men so many faiths, and all equally good, equally acceptable to God, if only sincere. How strongly, as he was showing me his book full of choice engravings of the different kinds of worship, the words struck my mind, “One faith.” O my friends, there is only “one faith,” and that the pure gift of God’s grace. As

the apostle declares, “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” (Eph. 2:8.) It is also spoken of as one of the fruits of the Spirit; for when the apostle enumerates the various fruits of the Spirit, he mentions faith amongst them: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.” (Gal. 5:22.) If, then, the special gift of God and the fruit of the Spirit, can there be as many faiths as there are creeds? as many believers as worshippers? If so, the worship of Baal is as good as the worship of Jehovah; and faith in Mahomet is equal to faith in Jesus Christ. As the gift of God, it must be one; for God has but one faith to give. It must necessarily also be one as having one author, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is spoken of as “the author of our faith;” one finisher, for he who is the author is also the finisher; and one object, the same blessed Lord. One text combines the whole three: “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” (Heb. 12:1, 2.) It is one also as having one end—salvation: “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” (1 Pet. 1:9.) Having, then, one author, one finisher, one object, and one end, it can be but one faith. Again, if we look at the operation of this faith, you will see that it is and can be but one. It worketh by love (Gal. 5:6); and as love is but one, the faith that works by it must be one also. This is faith’s grand test—the proof of its heavenly birth—for false faith cannot work by love, there being no union between nature and grace. But spiritual faith can and does work by love: for it comes from the same source, God, who is love; dwells in the same heart as the fruit of the same Spirit (Gal. 5:22); and obtains the same eternal recompense in the fruition of endless bliss. It is also “one faith” as alone overcoming the world; for there is but one faith that gains this mighty victory. This is John’s noble challenge, where he proclaims aloud, “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” It is as if he looked around him and saw what the world was and what the men were who live in it: the world how strong, man how weak. This man he

saw overcome by the lust of the flesh; another by the lust of the eye; a third by the pride of life. Looking down from his watch tower upon the crowd below, he saw them all, man after man, sink and fall, and most of them to rise no more, under the chariot wheels of the conquering world; but amongst the vanquished mass he descried one who was able to overcome it, and he saw how this man won the victory, which was by faith, and that upon a special object, the Son of God. Seeing, then, that this man was the victor when all the others were vanquished, he cried aloud as in holy triumph, "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5:4, 5.)

Again, there is only one faith that can purify the heart. (Acts 15:9.) if the heart of man, that cage of unclean birds, is ever purified from the guilt, filth, power, love, and practice of sin, it must be by something of a different nature from that which pollutes it. Now a natural faith is a polluted faith, for, springing from our corrupt nature, it necessarily partakes of its corruption. But a polluted faith can no more purify a polluted heart than foul water can cleanse foul clothes. It must be pure faith, flowing out of the Redeemer's fulness as the water from his wounded side, which can alone purify the heart from the pollutions of sin. The effect of this is "to purify the soul in obeying the truth through the Spirit." (1 Pet. 1:22.) The apostle in Heb. 11. gives us a long account of the faith of the Old Testament saints, mentioning their names and enumerating their exploits. Yet but one faith, the faith of God's elect, dwelt in all their breasts. Abel had not one kind of faith, Enoch another, Noah a third, and Abraham a fourth; but each that one which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Believers are said, therefore, "to walk in the steps of the faith of their father Abraham" (Rom. 4:12); and the apostle declares that he and they, to whom he wrote had "the same spirit of faith" with David, when he said, "I believed and therefore have

I spoken." (Psalm 116:10; 2 Cor. 4:13.) Does not all this show that one and the same faith dwells in the breast of every child of God now? And thus every true believer has union and communion with all the saints of God who have ever lived on earth, from the days of righteous Abel up to the present moment. What a uniting band is this knitting together the whole mystical body! But if so, why should there be strife and division among the people of God? If you had a natural and I a spiritual faith, or the reverse; or if I were looking at one Object and you at another; if we did not believe in the same blessed Lord, we might well differ. But if I believe in God and you believe in God; if I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; if we both believe in the same atoning blood, in the same justifying obedience, in the same dying love, in the same finished work, in the same salvation by grace; and if my faith works as your faith does, by the same operation, under the same influence, to the same end, and with the same effects and fruits, then surely that one and the same faith should be a knitting joint, a cementing band, between you and me. Why should we quarrel then and dispute about a few minor matters, which, as compared with life spiritual and life eternal, are but as the small dust of the balance? We might do so if we had two different faiths, or believed in two different Lords; but having the same faith in the same Lord, it is a connecting band not only to knit you and me together, but us both to all the members of the mystical body of Christ. Is not this, then, a blessed motive to induce us to endeavour with all our power "to walk in love as Christ also hath loved us?"

2. Again, there is but "one hope," which is in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is emphatically called "the hope of Israel" (Jer. 14:8), and "our hope" (1 Tim. 1:1), as being the only object of hope. "Let Israel hope in the Lord" (Psal. 130:7); "In thee, O Lord, do I hope." (Psal. 38:15.) "Hope thou in God," was David's cheering word to his cast down, disquieted soul. (Psal. 42:11.) But this hope, as a knitting bond of the mystical body, a cementing band of the living temple of Christ, is but one. There can no more be two saving hopes, "for we

are saved by hope” (Rom. 8:24), than there can be two saving faiths. Were there no other proof, we should find one in the words of our text, “Even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.” There can be but one true effectual calling, and a good hope through grace springs out of it. Apply this to your hope. What does your hope of eternal life spring from? If you were asked to give a reason of the hope that is in you, what account should you give? Would it not be intimately connected with your call by grace? You would say, “It is because the Lord has in times past done something for my soul. He called me by his grace when I neither knew, nor feared, nor loved him; made me pass under the rod, convinced me of sin and my lost, ruined state; and, after a time, revealed his dear Son in me. His word has come with power to my heart, his promises have comforted my soul, and his visitations have preserved my spirit. And all these marks of my heavenly calling have given me a sweet hope in his mercy, to which I cleave as an anchor of my soul both sure and stedfast.” Having this hope in your soul, you are led to converse with another child of God, and you seem to want to know the ground of his hope also, that you may have sweet union and fellowship with him, for you feel drawn out in affection toward him from what you have seen in or heard of him. He tells you of what the Lord has done for his soul; how God began the work of grace upon his heart; what trouble and distress he felt, and how the Lord in due season delivered him, and from time to time has blessed him with promises, with smiles, and with words of encouragement in hours of darkness and trouble. You feel at once a sweet union with him, and, in the openness of your heart and the warmth of your affection, you say, “I am convinced that God has begun a good work in you. What you have been telling me is commended to my conscience. I have union with you, because I feel of the same spirit with you.” In this way “those that feared the Lord” in times of old “spake often one to another” (Mal. 3:16), and thus obtained and maintained mutual union and communion. But if he can tell you nothing of what God has done

for his soul; if you can see no beginning to his religion, no one gracious mark on which you can lay your hand as being wrought by a divine power as an evidence of his heavenly calling, you have no union with him, because your hope and his hope differ. The hope of the hypocrite, which shall perish, be cut off, and brushed away as a spider’s web (Job 8:13, 14), or the hope of a Pharisee, which centres in his own righteousness, is not the same as that in the breast of the child of God, which hangs upon Christ, and the work and witness of the Spirit in the heart. There is no union, therefore, or communion between the two, for there is no knitting joint, no cementing band, of one and the same hope. But where there is this uniting tie, should we not seek to strengthen it, and avoid everything which may tend to weaken or impair it?

3. But we must hasten on to the third and last uniting joint and cementing band—”one baptism.” This I believe to be the baptism of the Holy Ghost; not indeed to the exclusion of baptism by water, which is an emblem of it. And my reason for saying it is the higher and spiritual baptism which is intended here, is the apostle’s own language elsewhere. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free.” (1 Cor. 12:13.) But the mere external ordinance of baptism cannot be said to be the cementing band in the same way as the baptism of the Spirit is, for many have been baptized in water who never were baptized by the Holy Ghost, and many have been baptized by the Holy Ghost who were never baptized in water. Baptism by water only incorporates me into the visible church, but baptism by the Holy Ghost incorporates me into the mystical body of Christ himself. The one I believe and practise as an ordinance of Christ; but the other I receive and prize as the greatest blessing the Lord can give. I have not union and communion with every baptized person, for there are many such to whom I would not give the right hand of fellowship; whom I would not receive into my house, nor bid them God speed, lest I be a partaker of their evil deeds (2 John 10, 11); but I desire to have fellowship with all who have been

baptized with the Holy Ghost; and some of them I dearly love who do not see with me as regards the outward ordinances.

Take, then, with me a parting view of these three connecting ligaments of the mystical body of Christ; these three cementing bands of the spiritual temple. How, as internal ties knitting joint to joint, they unite into one compact living frame all the members of the mystical body of Christ. I have attempted to direct your minds mainly to these three points—the oneness of the body; the foundation of that oneness in a Triune God; and the uniting bands which knit every member of that body together. May we, then, ever bear in mind that there is but one body, one church, one fold, one spouse, one bride of the Lord the Lamb. “My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother; she is the choice one of her that bare her.” (Song 6:9.) Now if we severally, if we individually, are members of the mystical body of Christ, we shall, as the Lord is pleased to favour us with his Spirit and presence, seek to realise our union with Christ; and as we realise this, we shall desire to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We shall sink our petty differences, drop our little jars, and seek to enjoy union and communion with the whole family of God; to love those whom the Lord loves, and to walk in affection with those whom he has redeemed by his precious blood. Whilst time endures and our nature is what it is, family jars and divisions will always subsist; but every child of God should seek to “follow after the things which make for peace;” not merely with those who are bound up together with him in church fellowship, but with the whole family of God. Our union with all who fear God and believe in the Son of his love we should value beyond all other ties, as enduring when every other relationship fails. As far, then, as heaven is beyond earth, eternity beyond time, and the love of Christ beyond all earthly affection, so should we seek to maintain by all the means in our power union and communion with the people of God. This, however, it is impossible to do without great self-denial and much self-sacrifice; but we shall, sooner or later,

reap in our own bosoms the blessed fruit; for as a spirit of strife destroys all inward peace, so a spirit of love brings peace with God, peace with the brethren, and peace in our own conscience.

163 The Blessedness of the Man whom the Lord hath Chosen

Preached at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning,
Dec. 13, 1857

“Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts; we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thine holy temple.”

Psalm 65:4

There are many professors of religion who have the greatest horror possible of the doctrine of election. Awful indeed is the length to which the enmity of the carnal mind has carried some in their blasphemous speeches against this scriptural truth. There are those who have said, that if God has arbitrarily chosen some to salvation, and rejected others, he is no better than a tyrant or Moloch; and others have declared, that they would sooner be with Satan in hell than dwell with such a God in heaven. But I will not pollute my lips with the awful blasphemies that ungodly men, both professing and profane, have vented against this branch of divine sovereignty. In spite of all their indignation and enmity, it still stands as an immutable truth, that “the election hath obtained it, and the rest are blinded;” (Rom. 11:7,) and that “it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” (9:16.)

Now, these very same persons who think it most unreasonable that God should exercise his election, think it very reasonable that they should exercise theirs. For instance; they think it highly reasonable that they should choose their own partners in life; yet they think it very unreasonable that Christ should choose

his own Bride. What would they think if they were denied this right of election? or if they were compelled to take in marriage any woman that chose to thrust herself upon them? And is it not equally unreasonable, in a divine sense, that Christ should be forced to take into union and communion with himself every proud pharisee or presumptuous professor that chooses to make a claim upon him?

Again; they think it highly reasonable that they should have the right of choosing their own abode, and selecting the house where they should dwell; yet they think it highly unreasonable that God should choose the persons whom he may make his temple, and in whom he may take up his abode for ever.

So also; they would think it highly unreasonable, if they were not allowed to choose that business or profession in life, which should most display their abilities, and open up the greatest avenue for profit or praise; yet they think it highly unreasonable that God should choose a people in whom he will be glorified.

“But,” they might say, “the parallel does not hold good; there is no analogy in the case. You are speaking of the things of time, in which choice may be allowed; but election regards eternity, where we certainly cannot allow it at all.” But we do [perhaps this should be, do we?] not find that, just in proportion to the length of time, they claim to themselves the right of choice? For instance; a person might put up with a very inconvenient apartment for a night, but he would not think of choosing such a place as a habitation for life; or you might stay with a person for an hour, whose company you would not like for a month. So that just in proportion to the length of time, we claim to have a right of choice. May we not carry this into divine things? Is not God perfectly at liberty to choose the persons who shall dwell with him for ever in glory? And has he not, as a Sovereign, a clear right to select whom he will to be partakers of his happiness? Men may rebel at these doctrines, and kick at these mountains of brass; but “Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!” Sooner or later, all such contentions will end in

the destruction of the contenders. It is our wisdom and mercy not to cavil, but to submit. And if God has given to us any testimony of our election in Christ, they will answer a hundred cavils better than any arguments, and satisfy our souls more than a thousand reasons.

We find, in the text, a blessing pronounced upon the man whom God hath chosen, “Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth.” We do not find David venting his gall and enmity against election; but rather pouring out his heart in thanksgiving that God had a people in whom he would be glorified, and especially pronouncing a blessing upon the happy individual on whom that eternal choice is fixed.

With God’s blessing, we will take up the text in the same order as the Holy Ghost has revealed it; and consider its different branches and various clauses, as it lies before us in the word of truth.

I.—It begins, “Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth.” Why should this man be blessed? Because election is the root of all blessings, the source and fountain of every spiritual mercy that the soul receives. This is the ever-flowing and overflowing fountain, from which all the streams of mercy and grace come into the heart, and in which the redeemed will bathe throughout the never-ending ages of eternity.

But let us look a little closer into the nature of this choice.

1. We observe at once, that it is a personal and individual choice that the Holy Ghost here speaks of, “Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth.” This makes election such a personal matter, that it is fixed, not upon nations and countries, and such loose generalities, but upon individuals. And in this way God always seals it upon the conscience, by bringing it home with power to the heart of each individual object of his favour.

2. It is also a choice in Christ; as we read, “According as he hath chosen us in him” (that is, Christ), “before the foundation of the world.” (Eph. 1:4.) The election of the people of God is in the Son of his love. He is their covenant Head, in whom they have their

eternal standing. They are chosen not for any works, goodness, or worthiness in them; but they are elected in Christ, “to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made us accepted in the Beloved.”

3. But this choice is unto eternal life; as we read (Acts 13:48), “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” And how much is summed up in this expression, “eternal life!” that when time shall be no more, when the wicked shall be turned into hell, and this changeable scene shall have closed, then the happiness of the redeemed shall be but commencing, a happiness that will know no termination, but continue through never-ending ages.

4. But in choosing his people, the Lord has made ample provision by the way, that they shall not, as men say, “live as they list;” that they shall not abuse this doctrine unto licentiousness, or give free scope to their base lusts and passions. We, therefore, read, that they are “elect unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:2); and that they are “God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:10.) So that when this precious truth of election is sealed upon the conscience, so far from relaxing the obligations to holiness, it binds a man more closely to obedience, and causes him to bring forth those fruits of righteousness which are to the praise and glory of God. Where the doctrine of election does not do this for a man, it does nothing for him. If it do not constrain him by every sweet and holy tie to yield his body, soul, and spirit, to the service of God; if it bring him not out of the world, and separate him as a vessel of honour made meet for the Master’s use; if it do not bind him with cords of love, to the throne of God, it is but a doctrine floating in the head, but a speculation in the natural understanding. It is not a truth sealed upon the heart, and received into the conscience under the teachings of God the Spirit.

II.—But we pass on to consider what flows out of this eternal choice of God. “Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and

causest to approach unto thee.” The original choice is the root; the approach unto God is the fruit. The one precedes and is the cause of the other; for every one whom God chooses he causes to approach unto him.

Now, what and where are we by nature? We should never forget our base original. The Lord tells us to “look unto the rock whence we are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we are digged.” (Isa. 51:1.) We must never forget our fallen condition; as the Lord bade his people confess, “A Syrian ready to perish was my father.” (Deut. 26:5.) Thus he bids us consider our fallen state by nature, that by looking into that horrible pit and miry clay, we may see how the hand of the Lord has mercifully brought us out.

What and where are we, then, by nature. At a distance from God, alienated from him, carnal, callous, reckless, dead in sin, without one spiritual feeling or heavenly desire, without one holy breathing or panting to know God, and to have his mercy revealed to our conscience. An impenetrable barrier closing up all spiritual access, exists between God and our soul. The Lord in choosing his people, has not chosen them to die as they were born; he has not elected them to live in ignorance, enmity, and sin, and then, when death comes, to take them to heaven without a change. That is not God’s election. But God having “chosen them that they should be holy and without blame before him in love,” brings them to the spiritual knowledge of himself, that they may thus be made new creatures, and made meet by a divine work upon their consciences for the inheritance of the saints in light. He therefore breaks down the barriers between himself and their souls. But he makes us feel there is a barrier before he breaks it down. What are these barriers?

1. The first barrier that stands between a just God and a guilty soul, is the holy law. Did you ever notice the place where the altar is first spoken of under the law, and the spot which it also occupied in the tabernacle? Where do we find an altar of burnt-offering first commanded? In Exod. 20:24, the very chapter where the law was given. No sooner had God revealed the law with thunderings and

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lightnings from Mount Sinai, than he speaks of the altar which they were to build for him; typically showing, that no sooner is the sinner condemned by the law, than there is the altar of Christ's atoning blood to flee to. Did you ever also notice the situation which the brazen altar occupied in the tabernacle? It was not in the "holy of holies," where none but the High Priest entered once a year; nor "in the holy place," to which the Priests alone had access; but it was in the court, in the entrance before the holy place, in order that all Israel might see it. "And he put the altar of burnt-offering, by the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation." (Ex. 40:29.) The altar of burnt-offering, with its ever burning fire, was typical of the offering of the Lord Jesus, and it was so placed, that its smoke and flame was the first sight that presented itself to the eye of the worshipper. Thus, when we first see and feel the guilt of sin under a broken law, we cannot advance till there is a sight of the altar. "We have an altar," says the Apostle. (Heb. 13:10.) But when this altar (that is, the sacrifice and propitiation for sin which Jesus made), is made known in the soul, it breaks down the partition wall, and enables the soul to draw near unto God.

2. But besides this barrier of guilt from a broken law, there is also another, which arises from the soul being penetrated with shame. When God the Spirit touches the conscience with his finger, and charges the sin home upon it, it not merely produces a feeling of guilt, but also confusion of face. Our first parents, till they had broken God's command knew no shame; nor do we till we know we are sinners in his sight. Now we cannot draw near with confidence unto the Lord, so long as we feel shame before him. He has, then, provided means to remove this sense of inward shame; he has appointed "the blood of sprinkling" to purge the conscience from filth, and dead works, to serve the living God. Through the one propitiation, spiritually made known, the conscience becomes cleansed, and the soul finds access to God through the blood of the Lamb; therefore we read, "For your

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shame ye shall have double." (Isa. 61:7); and again, "Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed; neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame; for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more." (Isa. 54:4.)

3. But we want something more than this. The soul convinced of sin, and deeply penetrated with shame and confusion of face, needs something more than the sight of that atoning blood that cleanseth from all sin. It wants with it the secret drawings of the Spirit, as the Bride says, "Draw me, we will run after thee." (Sol. Song 1:4); and as the Lord speaks to the church, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jer. 31:3.) We find this sweetly set forth in the Canticles, "My beloved put in his hand by the hole in the door, and my bowels were moved for him." (5:4.) The Lord is here represented as putting forth his hand into the soul, and thus secretly drawing up the heart and affections for himself.

Under these inward drawings and secret movements of the Spirit upon the heart, the Lord causes us to approach unto him. We cannot approach him in faith and affection until he draws us with the cords of love, and the bands of a man; but when he puts forth his hand and touches the heart, he secretly yet irresistibly draws the soul near to himself.

4. But we must feel something more still to be caused to approach, for we are very backward to draw near to God. Guilt, sin, and shame darken the mind, harden the heart, and numerous things, springing from the world and the flesh together, keep us back from the Lord. So that to cause us to approach unto him, he gives some glimpses of his reconciled countenance, some intimations of his favour, some droppings-in of a gracious promise just suited to our state, or some heart melting testimony that meets every want. Under these the heart becomes broken, softened, and humbled, and is enabled to approach unto the Lord.

But how do we approach him? If we approach him aright, it is

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with confession. We cannot, if God has touched our conscience with his finger, rush recklessly and heedlessly into his presence; for there will be in the heart, under divine teachings, a reverence of his great name, a godly fear, a prostration of spirit before him, with confession and acknowledgment of sin. But this is humbling work. We find it so naturally. If we have done that which is wrong, how hard and humbling it is to make acknowledgment! How it goes against the pride of our heart! What a humbling place it is to take, to have to confess we have acted wrongly or foolishly! So spiritually, it is a very humbling place to take, to come with confession, and acknowledge and bewail our manifold backslidings, our heart idolatries, the base and aggravated sins that our consciences at times feel and groan under. Yet after all it is sweet to confess. Humility is far sweeter than pride; confession is far sweeter than self-justification. It is so naturally. When the wife has offended the husband, or when the husband has offended the wife; when the child has offended the parent, or the servant the master; whatever secret gratification there may be in self-justification and obstinate stubbornness, it is really much sweeter to confess. Much more so spiritually. When we can confess our sins, when the tears roll down our cheeks, when the bosom heaves with sobs of genuine contrition, there is a pleasure and sweetness in this honest confession far greater than in the devilish gratification of standing out proudly and presumptuously against God and conscience. But the Lord himself must touch the heart; and when he touches it, confession will flow out. Like the rock that Moses struck, our hearts naturally are hard and impenetrable; but no sooner was it smitten by the wonder-working rod than the waters gushed out. So no sooner are our hearts struck by the word of God than brokenness, contrition, and confession flow forth. With these, there will be prayer also and supplication; as we read, “They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them.” (Jer. 31:9.) This is the way in which the soul approaches the Lord; not with hardened presumption, but with supplication, earnest

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breathings, filial pantings, and desires after the manifestations of himself; so that the soul pours itself, so to speak, into the bosom of God.

5. But we cannot approach unto the Lord without some measure of divine faith, as the Apostle says, “He that cometh to God must believe that he is.” (Heb. 11:6.) So that when the Lord would cause us to approach unto him, he kindles and draws out into exercise a measure of faith in our hearts; and by this faith we take hold of God’s strength, as we read, “Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me.” (Isa. 27:5.) By faith we embrace the promises; by faith we eye the Saviour at God’s right hand, on his throne of grace and glory; by faith we view the blood of sprinkling; by faith we look into the compassionate and sympathizing bosom of Jesus; by faith we believe the truth as it is revealed in him; and by faith these things are laid hold of, brought in, embraced, and in a measure enjoyed in the heart. What a mercy it is to be enabled thus to approach unto God in Christ! He is the source of light and life; every blessing for time and eternity comes from him; and by approaching unto him, we get a measure of these blessings. If we are in darkness, when the Lord causes the soul to approach unto him, light comes and dispels it. If we are in heaviness, and the Lord causes us to approach unto him, he disperses it; for though “Weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning.” (Psa. 30:8.) If trials—family, bodily, or providential—if heavy weights and burdens press down, when the Lord causes us to approach unto him, and we get near that eternal and inexhaustible Source of bliss and blessedness, these afflictions become lightened, at least for a time are removed off the shoulders, crooked things become straight; and rough places are made plain. Have you not found it so? And if you know what it is to approach unto the Lord, however hard you may feel, whatever darkness covers the mind, whatever iciness may seem to freeze up every breathing of our soul, yet when the Lord gives us power to come near unto him (for we have no power to do it ourselves) a measure of relief and ease

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generally follow. Now, if I am parching for thirst, where must I go to alleviate it? Must I not go to the Fountain of living waters? If I am cold, shall I revive myself by dipping my hand into ice? I must go near the source of warmth and heat; I must get near the sun. And so spiritually, if I am cold, torpid, frozen, so as to have no spiritual feeling in exercise, how am I to get warmth to revive my icy and benumbed soul? By approaching the Sun of Righteousness. If I am hungry naturally, how is that hunger to be removed? Not by talking or thinking about food, but by partaking of the bread put into my hand. So if I hunger spiritually, my hunger can only be satisfied by feeding upon the bread of life. What a libel then upon the doctrine of election it is, to say, "Because a man is elected he may live as he pleases; that he may be a quickened vessel of mercy, and yet be a vile monster of iniquity." O what a libel! The Psalmist says, "Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee." If, then, the Lord chooses a man, he causes that man to approach unto him. Now is it not a libel upon the character of God, to say, that a man can approach unto a holy God, and yet live in unholiness; that he can draw near to an all-pure and blessed Jehovah, and yet wallow in sin and filth; that he can be brought nigh to a God hating and abhorring sin with perfect hatred, and yet indulge in every vile gratification. Why if I approach unto God I must get some resemblance unto him. It is so in all cases. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed." (Prov. 13:20.) Does not worldly intercourse make us worldly; and does not spiritual intercourse tend to make us spiritual? As we draw near to gracious, well-taught people, do we not often find some measure of spirituality communicated through them to our hearts? And can we draw near unto the Fountain of light and life, as a holy sin-hating God, and then say, "we may live in sin and do the things which that holy God abhors?" I will tell you when it is we can do things which God hates. It is when we live at a distance from him, when there is no approach unto that Fountain of light and life,

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when the world has a firm possession of us, when we are unable to draw near through darkness of mind, and the soul is gone out after its idols. It is not by approaching near unto the Lord that we commit sin; that purifies, cleanses, and spiritualizes the heart, that destroys the power of sin; and the more we approach unto him, the more power and grace we receive out of him to mortify sin, and crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts.

III.—Our next point is to consider, why the Lord causes the man of his choice to approach unto him; "that he may dwell in thy courts." What are these courts? The courts of the temple. The temple was a figure of Jesus, which shadowed forth his holy human nature. And as God dwelt visibly in the temple, by the Shekinah on the mercy-seat, so does the Godhead dwell in the Lord Jesus Christ; "for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Col. 2:9.) That, then, is the reason why the temple is so much spoken of in God's word, and why so many blessings are connected with it. And thus in the text, when it is said, "that he may dwell in thy courts," it is not meant merely the courts of the earthly temple, but to dwell in those courts which the earthly temple shadowed forth. This is why we are caused to approach unto God. It is to dwell near unto Jesus; it is to have a sense of mercy, pardon, and peace received into the conscience out of his glorious fulness.

But let us look a little at the word dwell—"that he may dwell in thy courts." It signifies a fixed habitation; so that the man whom God chooses, and causes to approach unto himself, has a fixed abode in the courts of the Lord's house. This implies, that he is brought out of the world, no more to go back; that he is cut off from a dead form of religion, to be wrapped up in it no more; that he is brought out of every thing earthly, sensual, and devilish, so as to be transformed by the renewing of his mind; that he is brought into a spiritual, holy, and experimental relationship with God, and knows something of living under the shadow of the Almighty. The courts were connected with the temple, were a part of the temple, and the sanctity of the temple were communicated to them. These

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courts were built after a divine pattern, as we read, "Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the Lord." (1 Chr. 27:11, 12.) None but the priests could enter into the temple, and none but the High Priest could enter into the most holy place; but the courts of the temple, which were part of the temple, were open to all the children of Israel. There is a sweet figure in this, that those who dwelt in the courts of the temple were sanctified so to speak, by the temple. It was in the court of the temple that the sacrifices were offered; in the holy place that the altar of incense and the table of shew-bread stood; and in the most holy place the ark of the covenant, with the mercy-seat, on which the Shekinah, or divine glory rested; whence God is said to "dwell between the cherubims;" (Psa. 81:1) and there too the Spirit of prophecy resided. The holy human nature of Jesus, and his mediatorial work, grace, and glory, were all shadowed forth by the temple, (it being built after the pattern of the tabernacle in the wilderness;) and this was the reason why the believing Israelites of old so loved and looked to it. Thus Jonah, in the very belly of hell, said, "I will look unto thy holy temple" (Jonah 2:4), and Daniel, when in captivity in Babylon, though death was the penalty, opened his window three times a day towards Jerusalem, his eyes looking towards the place where the temple stood, though then in ruins. In the temple then every thing dwelt to meet the wants and necessities of spiritual worshippers. It is so in him whom the temple feebly shadowed forth. I am guilty, filthy, defiled; where shall I go, but to the temple? for there is the brazen laver, typifying the fountain open for sin and uncleanness. I am a poor guilty criminal in myself; I need mercy; where must I go for it, but to the mercy-seat sprinkled with atoning blood; I am often in great darkness of mind; I need light; where must I go for it but to the Shekinah, where the light shines, the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? I have continually enigmas to unravel, dark mysteries to be solved; where shall I go but to the temple,

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that the all-wise Prophet may untie those intricate knots, clear up these dark experiences, unwind the mysterious providence, and bring relief under my various exercises? In the temple too all the love of God is concentrated, for it is in Christ alone that the love of God is displayed. "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10.) In the temple of Christ's human nature the love of God is manifested. There is no love out of that temple. No; nothing but wrath, and indignation, and consuming fire; nothing but righteous vengeance of God against sin and unholiness out of the Person, blood and righteousness of God's dear Son. Do I want love, then, in my heart? It is to be enjoyed in the courts of the temple where alone this love is manifested. Do I want reconciliation, pardon, peace, and every gospel blessing? It is in the temple, in the courts of the temple, where God's honour dwelleth, that all these blessings are bestowed upon spiritual worshippers.

Thus it was that David could bless the man so highly favoured. He saw how favoured he was whom God had chosen to inherit these mercies; he felt what a blessing arose from this eternal choice, in God causing the poor sinner to approach near the footstool of his mercy; he knew too what a blessing there was wrapped up in the act of coming to the courts of God's temple, and dwelling therein as a spiritual worshipper; and under these feelings he cried, in another place, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." (Psalm 84:10.) And so says every spiritual worshipper, who has seen the glory of God in the temple; who has tasted peace, pardon, mercy, love, blood and salvation through a crucified Jesus, and felt glory dropping into his conscience under the unction of the Holy Ghost. He would rather have the meanest place in the Lord's house, and say, "A day in these courts, the courts of the Lord's house, is better than a thousand spent in vanity and sin;" he would rather occupy the meanest position in the church of God, so as to live under the anointings of the Holy Ghost in his

soul, than fill the most distinguished station in the world.

IV.—And this leads David on to speak in behalf of himself and of the spiritual Israel. He says, “We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.” Have we not tried the world? For how many years did we labour to glut our fleshly appetites with the dust and dirt that the world offered us; but did we ever reap any solid satisfaction from it? Have we not endeavoured to satisfy ourselves with the pleasures, so called, of sin? and did they ever leave anything but pain and sorrow behind them? Have we not attempted to satisfy ourselves with works, with a form of godliness, a name to live, a self-righteous religion? but was there not always something wanting? Have we not tried to satisfy ourselves with doctrines floating in the judgment, and yet reaped no satisfaction; for there was always an aching void? Guilt was not purged away, sin was not pardoned, Christ not revealed, the love of God not shed abroad, salvation not known; so that there was no satisfaction in anything; all was a blank, (and all is a blank except that,) all is vanity and vexation of spirit, except the goodness of God’s house to our souls. But when the Lord has fixed his choice upon a vessel of mercy, and when, in pursuance of that choice, cutting him off from the world, he causes him, by the internal teachings and drawing of his Spirit, to approach unto himself, brings him to dwell in the courts of his temple, and shews him something of the beauty and glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—that satisfies him, and there is no satisfaction until that is made known. And what are we to be satisfied with? With a mere apprehension of Gospel truth? There is no satisfaction there. With our experience? Why, if we look at it, there are so many flaws and failings, so many ins and outs, so many things that stagger us, that we cannot be fully satisfied with all of that. Can we take the opinions of men concerning us? O, we think, they may all be deceived. Can we take our own opinion of ourselves? That is worse than the opinion of others; for “he that trusteth his own heart is a fool.”

With what, then, are we to be satisfied? “The goodness in God’s house,” that is, the goodness manifested in the Person of Christ. It is strange how spiritual persons should take such expressions as “the house of God,” and apply them to a building like this in which we are assembled. You commonly hear it said in prayer, “coming up to the house of God.” But what warrant is there in Scripture to call any church or chapel a house of God? I know the temple was the house of God, because God dwelt there; but “God does not now dwell in temples made with hands.” The houses of God in the New Testament has but two significations—the Person of Christ, for “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily:” and the other, God’s saints. “But Christ as a Son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.” (Heb. 4:6.) “Having a high Priest over the house of God.” (10:21) But no mere collection of bricks and mortar, consecrated or unconsecrated, adorned with a steeple, or without that appendage, is worthy of the name of “the house of God.” Christ is the house of God, for in him the Godhead dwells; and the saints are the house of God; for God dwells in them and walks in them. (2 Cor. 6:16.) If then, any elect vessel of mercy is to be “satisfied with the goodness of God’s house,” it does not mean that he is to be satisfied with the goodness of a chapel. All of some people’s religion consists in the chapel where they attend; they have a beautiful chapel, nicely fitted up, with a flourishing cause, a respectable congregation, and a talented minister. All their religion is in their chapel; and if you take that away, you take away all their religion. But a chapel, however well fitted up, however comfortable and convenient, will never satisfy the Lord’s people without the presence and power of God being felt and made known, and the inward dew and savour of the Spirit resting upon the minister and the heart of the hearers. I have felt more of the presence of the Lord in some stifled-up room, where I could scarcely breathe, than in some handsome chapels. And I would sooner in my right mind speak in a little room with the presence of God, than in the most

splendid chapel and to the largest congregation without it.

To be satisfied with the goodness of God's house is to be satisfied with God's goodness in the Person and work of Jesus. There all the goodness of God is seen and displayed; and O what a good God he is in Christ! What grace and mercy, what favour and love are manifested in the Person of Jesus! And when we see the goodness of God's house, and feel how good and kind, how gracious, favourable, and merciful he can be and is in the Person of Jesus, that brings satisfaction. There is in him a righteousness and atoning blood to satisfy all the demands of the law, and all the cravings of a guilty conscience; there is a power that satisfies, a love that satisfies, a salvation that satisfies; and nothing else but these will satisfy. Now, when the soul is brought near unto the Lord, so as to dwell in his courts, it begins to taste a little of the goodness of God's house; and as it tastes the goodness of God's house, that is, the goodness of God in the face of Jesus Christ, it binds the soul to this house. You know, goodness has a sweet attractive power; and as we feel goodness, mercy, grace, and favour, it binds the soul to those courts; it is satisfied with the goodness of God's house, even of his holy temple; and with it can live and die, if God is pleased to favour it with a sweet enjoyment of it.

Let us, with God's blessing, gather up the fragments of the loaf that I have been endeavouring to break. We will look, first of all, at the point we opened with—the original election of God. There may be some here who kick at that doctrine; and perhaps may have gone to such awful lengths as to speak against it unbecomingly, and revile it as a doctrine horrible and hateful. Now I will ask you one question, and appeal to your natural conscience, for spiritual I fear you have none. Did not the Holy Ghost by the pen of David declare, "Blessed is the man that thou chooseth?" Now, if you say, there is no such thing, is it not in a moment sweeping away the blessing which the Holy Ghost has pronounced? Rather look into your heart, and see why you speak against what God has so plainly revealed. But God's people know it to be the truth, that a

man is blessed whom God has chosen. Many of God's dear people, who are much tried about their own election, whether God has chosen them, are perfectly satisfied that God has an elect people; their trials and exercises do not arise from doubts and fears about the truth of the doctrine; but this is the point upon which they are tried, whether they are of the elect. They are certain that God has a peculiar people; but the question is, "Am I one of them?" for they are sure that none but this people will go to glory. They say, "Has God put me among them?" And it is good to have these exercises; they establish the soul; they open the way for some sweet encouragement, because sooner or later after these exercises God's manifested mercy comes.

This, then is the root—the choice of God. The fruit is, being caused to approach unto God. There may be some here, (doubtless there are), who are saying, "O that the Lord would tell me that I am one of his chosen!" Let me ask you a few questions. Has God caused you to approach unto him? Have you felt the barrier of a broken law, the guilt and shame of sin upon your conscience; and yet at times have found all these hindrances removed out of your way? Have you ever been enabled to pour out your heart before the Lord, and vented your breathings into his bosom, confessed your sins, and bewailed them with godly sorrow? And do you ever feel any exercise of faith in your soul, whereby, though perhaps with a trembling hand, you take hold of God's promises? Remember her who touched the hem of Jesus' garment; it was with a trembling hand; she did not rush boldly forward, and seize the hem with a firm and vigorous grasp; but she trembled as she touched, though she knew if she could but touch it she should be made perfectly whole. Perhaps some of you trembling ones have some of this faith; you could not come presumptuously forward, but trembled as you took hold of some promise lest that promise did not belong to you; and yet you longed in your soul to embrace it. You have felt and found some workings of love toward Jesus, though you could not say you were sure that he loved you; yet there were

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some times and seasons when you felt sure that you loved him. You could not have loved him, if he had not drawn you near to himself. Have you not found a secret strength breathed into your heart, whereby you have wrestled with God at the mercy-seat, and said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me?" (Gen. 32:26.) Have you not felt some secret power, whereby you were enabled to pour out your soul before him, and plead his promises? Then you were a wrestling Jacob; and you will come off some day, and that soon perhaps, a prevailing Israel. I would ask a little more, these questions sometimes bring out the life of God. Have you not found sometimes a little satisfaction in the things of the Spirit? When you have read God's word, have you not sometimes had a sweet light cast upon it, and felt a sweetness distilled out of some branch of heavenly truth? When you have heard the ministers of the Lord opening up and tracing out the experience of God's people, have you not felt a responsive echo to the things taught by the Spirit to the living family? And though perhaps it has only lasted for a short time, yet there are times and seasons when you have felt some inward happiness in the things of God, more than you ever dreamt of in the world, or have since thought it possible to enjoy, except by those who have the full assurance of faith?

Well now, if the Lord has caused you to approach unto him, caused you to dwell in his courts, and if he is satisfying your conscience that there is no real happiness but in himself, notwithstanding the darts of Satan and the workings of your base hearts, you are elected unto eternal life; God has chosen you, though you cannot be certain that he has fixed his eternal love upon you. Do we see the root of a tree? It is hidden in the ground. We see the stem and branches, and sometimes pluck the fruit. So election is the fruit of all the blessings that the soul ever enjoys; and its approaching unto the Lord is the fruit of it.

Now, doubtless, there are some here, who cannot see the root, but yet there is the fruit which they bear to God's glory; and the Lord the Spirit has brought forth in their hearts and lives

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his gracious fruits, though perhaps their minds are often fearing, desponding, sinking, and fainting; and they cannot boldly say, that God has chosen them unto eternal life. We see sometimes the stream, but who can tell where the fountain rises? The noble river Thames that flows through the metropolis, we see its streams; but who here has seen the fountain whence those streams gush forth? So the streams of mercy, grace, and truth, may flow into a man's conscience, and yet he may be unable to see the fountain and source whence these streams take their eternal rise. But if there were no fountain there would be no streams; the very streams show us the reality and existence of the fountain. And thus because all here whose hearts God has touched cannot see they are chosen, it does not from thence follow they are not of the elect. It is a mercy to have the enmity of the human heart against the doctrine slain. It is a mercy to be brought to this spot, to feel that unless we are chosen we cannot be saved. It is a mercy to know guilt, shame, and confusion of face before God. It is a mercy to feel darkness of mind, and at times to have it removed by the light of God shining into the soul. It is a mercy to know one's own unbelief, infidelity, and helplessness; for by knowing those things by divine teaching a way is opened up for God to appear as removing all these obstacles, and causing these mountains to flow down at his presence. And in thus opening up a way for his grace and glory to be manifested, he secures to himself all the praise and glory, while the soul realizes its sweetness and enjoyment.

164 The Valley Exalted, and the Mountain Laid Low

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Afternoon,

April 4, 1858

"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be laid low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be re-

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vealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Isaiah 40:4, 5

We can have no doubt as to the primary and original meaning of these words, for the Holy Ghost himself, in the New Testament, is their divine interpreter. We read thus, Matthew 3:1-3:—"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

The language of the text is, of course, highly figurative, and is an illusion to a practice in ancient times of Oriental monarchs. There being in those days no highways nor beaten roads in most parts of their dominions, when they intended to visit some of their distant provinces, they were accustomed not only to send messengers beforehand to announce their approach, but pioneers also to remove all impediments to their progress. There were often deep valleys and morasses, which had to be filled up; hills and mountains to be laid low; crooked paths and intricate roads amidst woods and forests, to be straightened; and rough places, overgrown with thorns, thickets, and briars, and overspread with loose rocks and stumbling stones, which had to be smoothed and taken away. As the king travelled in great state, it was necessary to make room for the royal chariot—for the approach of majesty with all its splendour; and as the monarch never journeyed unattended, the road was to be made wide enough for his suite of retainers and numerous cavalcade as well as for himself. The Holy Ghost, adopting this Eastern practice as a scriptural figure, represents thereby the obstacles that were to be removed for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords; for it is of him that the text speaks. As regards his first coming in the flesh, which is the primary meaning of the text,

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there were many obstacles in providence to be removed. Many barbarous and warlike tribes had to be subdued by the Romans and moulded into one universal, united Empire, that there might be a free intercourse by sea and land; one language—the Greek tongue—had to be generally spoken, that there might be a ready means of communicating the mind and will of God to the Gentile world. The Jews had to be subdued and brought under the Roman yoke, that Christ might appear in the flesh and die upon the cross—a purely Roman punishment. Roads had to be made, bridges built, ships constructed and navigated, towns and cities and colonies spread far and wide, general civilization advanced, and laws enacted and put in force, that the gospel might be preached to all nations. All the obstacles of barbarism, war, bloodshed, anarchy, and violence had to be removed, that the Prince of Peace might come and establish his kingdom upon earth. But besides the removal of these outward obstacles, the words have a special application to the ministry of John the Baptist, who, by his preaching in the wilderness, prepared a way for the manifestation of the Lord Jesus as the promised Messiah.

But the words of the text are applicable not only to the first manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, and the preparations made for it by the preaching of John in the wilderness, but to the removal also of those obstacles which precede the inward revelation of Christ to the soul; and it is in this latter point of view that I shall, with God's blessing, now consider them. In doing this, I shall

I.—First, direct your attention to the spiritual and experimental exalting of every valley, the making low of every mountain and hill, the straightening of that which is crooked, and the making plain of that which is rough.

II.—Secondly, dwell upon the inward revelation of Christ, as intimated by the words—"The glory of the Lord shall be revealed."

III.—Thirdly, open the gracious promise, that "all flesh shall see it together."

IV.—And fourthly, unfold God's own solemn ratification, that

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these things shall surely come to pass: “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

I.—I have just hinted that the figurative language of our text represents the removal of obstacles; but looking at the figures one by one, I shall, with God’s blessing, attempt to show how they severally bear upon the experience of a Christian. In this sense, what valleys have to be raised, what mountains and hills to be levelled, what, crooked things to be straightened, what rough places to be made plain, in order that the glory of God may be revealed! Everything in sense and nature is opposed to the revelation of Christ to the soul. Everything within us, everything without us, is opposed to his grace and his love, and to the manifestation of these blessings to the heart.

i. “Every valley shall be exalted.” By the “valley” we may understand those deep depressions in providence or in grace that have, so to speak, to be filled up, and thus a firm and solid way made for the chariot of the King of kings, which is “paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem” (Song Sol. 3:10) to enter the heart. You will find that the work of God usually begins with affliction, and very often in some deep providential trial. The Thessalonians received the word in much affliction (1 Thess. 1:6), whereas the stony ground hearers receive the word with joy (Matt. 13:20.) These afflictions make a deep and hidden valley in the heart, which nothing but the presence and love of Christ can fill up.

1. How many young people have been disappointed in their tenderest and warmest affections! And however old people whose hearts are dried up, and money grubbers of both sexes and all ages who never had a heart to dry up at all, may slight and ridicule these disappointments that the young so deeply and acutely feel, those who have experienced them know that there is nothing that so touches the heart’s tenderest core, no wound more piercing, no grief more lacerating than the poignant stroke that falls upon young and strong affections. And yet how often has the death of

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 natural love been the life of the soul, and out of the grave of the heart’s buried hopes has there been a resurrection into the kingdom of God and the hope of the gospel! Many a young person has dated the beginning of a work of grace from some cruel disappointment that seemed at the time to cut the very heart-strings of life. But for this crushing, overwhelming stroke, there would have been no room for Christ and his love. This is “a valley.”

2. How many also have felt it in the taking down of some dear idol out of its niche, in some heavy family stroke, such deep depressions of mind, such a sense of heart-rending distress, that it seemed at the time as if nothing upon earth could ever heal the wound—nothing that even God himself could give could ever compensate so irreparable a loss! How many a widow has wept bitter, bitter tears night and day over the memory of a departed husband! How many a husband has mourned over the wife of his youth, snatched by cruel disease from his bosom! How many a parent has wept over a beloved child, the very pride of the family, the fairest and most promising of them all, and as such engrossing perhaps the greatest share of their affections! These are “valleys” which in many cases are sunk beforehand in mercy that they may be exalted by the manifestation of Christ.

3. Others again have had great losses of property; nay, some, through sudden and most unexpected reverses, have been brought down from comparative comfort, to become dependent upon friends and relatives for their daily bread. Others have had all their worldly schemes withered—everything they set their hand to so blighted, as with the east wind, that nothing prospered with them, until they were reduced to the greatest poverty and distress. By these providential strokes, depressing both body and mind, the Lord sometimes makes a way for his grace to visit the heart. These disappointments, bereavements, losses, and afflictions are not grace, nor do they procure it, deserve it, produce, or even necessarily lead to it. How many have drunk the deepest, bitterest draughts of sorrow to whom it was but “the sorrow of the world that

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worketh death.” Men gnaw their tongues for pain, and yet so far from repenting of their deeds, may only the more blaspheme the God of heaven for their pains and their sores (Rev. 16:10, 12). But in the case of many of the Lord’s people, he often does send these afflictions and bereavements as harbingers of his appearance, to make a valley, which his love and grace may in due time fill up.

But there are spiritual valleys as well as providential, and these are much the more important. The Lord, by his grace, has to prepare a place for himself in the heart, by scooping out (if I may use the expression) that pride and self-righteousness of which, by nature, our mind is so full. But in order to do this, what deep wounds he often makes by his holy law! What pangs of guilt, cutting convictions, and severe distress does he produce by its spiritual application to the conscience! But why this except to produce a valley that only he can fill up by his blood and love? What depression of mind—what a giving way of cheerfulness and high spirits—what a dragging down both of body and soul, of health and strength, is there in many a partaker of grace under those dealings of God with his conscience that brings his sins to view! These depressing feelings, these inward sinkings, these falling down of body and soul under the hand of God, are so many chasms and valleys that are to be filled up.

But in natural valleys stagnant water continually settles which makes the whole of the sunken ground a morass. Thus there are deep pools of discovered sin in our heart, stagnant marshes, foul morasses of filth and slime, from which there is constantly exhaling a noisome effluvium of everything to make body and soul alike sicken and languish. These are the “miry places” and “marshes” that are “given to salt” (Ezek. 47:11); “the pools of water” where the bitter booms (Isaiah 14:23); the lower grounds of the soul where mists and fogs brood and settle. How are these valleys to be filled up? They must be filled up that the King of kings may come in his chariot of love. These “valleys,” then, are to be “exalted;” that is, to be raised up from their depressed

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condition. These holes and pits have to be filled up; these morasses to be drained; these deep sinkings of soil and soul to be made firm ground, that a solid road may be built upon them. As in the formation of a railway, the valley has to be filled up as well as the hill cut through: so in the figure before us the valley is to be exalted, as well as the mountain and hill made low. Now grace, in the manifestations of Christ, exalts the valley. The wound in your affections that you thought never could be healed; the distressing bereavement in your family; the painful trial and heavy loss in providence; and not only these temporal griefs and sorrows, but the mournful feelings in grace, the bitter pangs that you may have experienced from the weight and burden of guilt laid upon your conscience, your doubts and fears and sinkings of heart,—all these deep depressions and hollows have to be filled up; all have to be brought out of their quaking condition. That marshy state of soul; that “miry clay” in which the feet are fixed (Psalm 40:2); that “deep mire where there is no standing” (Psalm 69:2); that Slough of Despond into which the Pilgrim sinks, have all to be drained, that there may be firm, solid ground. This firm and solid ground is the manifested love and blood of Christ; the revelation (to which I shall come presently) of the glory of God to the soul, in the person and works of Immanuel, God with us. This exalts the valley, for it fills the aching void, heals the wound, drains the morass, and makes the ground firm and solid by manifesting salvation as a divine reality, as an unshaken and irremovable foundation. But before Christ thus comes to fill up every void, there is a preparing of the way for him by the promises and invitations of the gospel, and by the solid truths of divine revelation, which, cast, as it were, into the sinking soul, raise it up to a firm hope, and thus make way for a clearer and fuller manifestation of the Lord himself.

ii. But there are “mountains and hills,” and these are to be “made low;” because the road is to be perfectly level as well as perfectly straight. “Mountains and hills,” as figures, represent obstacles and difficulties that stand in the path. As we read in Zechariah, “Who

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art thou, O great mountain? (that is O great obstacle.) Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain”—thou shalt be levelled and removed. And who has not found, in the first approaches of God to his soul, in the first dealings of the blessed Spirit with his conscience, great mountains and hills in the way? Some of these are from nature, but not for that less trying quarters. How our relatives and friends oppose, perhaps persecute us; how our temporal interests often stand in the way of our conscience; and how, as was particularly my own case, all our worldly prospects and all our long and deeply cherished plans stand as a mountain in the way of taking up the cross and following Christ. My first stroke was the cutting down of all my worldly prospects, for those who could and would have advanced me to emolument and honour were deadly enemies to the truths of the gospel which I had embraced. The second was sharper still, for it took away my all, and almost stripped me to the last penny. When I was in the Church of England, I thought nothing could bring me out, for I dreaded the prospect of poverty and sickness, as I was at that time in a bad state of health. Oh, what a mountain this was before my eyes! The very thought of leaving, how it worked in my mind, until conscience knocked at the door again and again; and the voice of conscience at last obliged me to listen and obey. But so different was the prospect from reality, that the day after I left was one of the most comfortable I ever had in my life; and truly wonderful for more than twenty-three years since have been the Lord's providential dealings with me. You, perhaps, have had similar trials. Religion might have cost you the dearest friend you had in the world. You might have been attached, perhaps, to some carnal person, whom you loved almost to distraction, and yet were obliged to break off the connection for the sake of religion. Or you might have been in a situation of trust and emolument which you were compelled to relinquish, because the grace of God so wrought in your conscience that you felt you could not keep it and be a consistent follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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These are no common trials; but if saved from them, there was still the disgrace and shame that attend the public profession of the truth, and which your proud heart could hardly bear. Oh, if you could only have the gospel preached in your own parish church, or lived in London where nobody knew who you were or where you went! But to come to chapel and profess before a despising world a religion that would make you hated and scorned—that seemed an obstacle that never could be got over.

But these after all are but “hills,” and to some mere hillocks. There are “mountains” behind, which come into view as the “hills” are laid low: by which we may understand spiritual and inward, as distinct from temporal and outward obstacles.

1. There is, for instance, the hard heart—“the heart of stone,” as the Scripture calls it, which you never feel till you want to repent and cannot. Repentance and godly sorrow for sin, you are led to see are necessary to salvation; but they are Christ's gift, who is exalted to give both repentance and remission of sins. This hard heart, then, that you cannot remove or dissolve, stands as a mountain between heaven and your soul.

2. Again: unbelief with its workings; perhaps infidelity, with its dreadful suggestions; perhaps blasphemy, with its vile imaginations; perhaps Satan, with his fiery darts, discharging the artillery of hell against you;—all these were so many mountains that seemed to stand in your way, to intercept the light of heaven from your soul. You desired pardon and peace, but they would not come into your heart.

3. But the chief mountain of a quickened soul is its sins. Was not this your case when eternal things first pressed with weight upon your conscience? Under guilt and fear, at intervals by night and day you cried—“Oh, my sins! my sins! Oh, the guilt and bondage that I feel! Oh, the misery and wretchedness I have procured to myself by following the vile inclinations of my wicked heart!” All your sins were brought to light by the holy law of God and set before your eyes till you thought you would sink into hell. And as all

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these one after another rose to your view, they seemed mountains between you and God, so that you could scarcely hope that ever mercy would reach your case—could scarcely believe it possible that the grace of God itself could save you. You thought perhaps you had sinned against the Holy Ghost; said and done things that God neither would nor could forgive; been guilty of such horrid heart-wickedness and such contempt of God and godliness that even the mercy that reached the dying thief could not reach you. All these various and perplexing exercises of mind were so many mountains that stood day and night before your soul. I shall show by and by how those hills and mountains are laid low.

iii. But there are crooked things which are to be made straight. This figure casts a sweet light upon the exercises of many a saint of God, and the way in which the Lord removes them. Whenever the Lord begins a work of grace upon the heart, he always makes it sincere before him. Sincerity is the groundwork of all true religion. If a man be not sincere, he is nothing. The light of God searching his heart makes him see, and the life of God quickening his conscience makes him feel, that he has to do with One whom he dare not mock and cannot deceive. This makes him sincere before God and man. As, then, light is given to see and light to feel, he begins to find what crooked things there are in his carnal mind: what deceit, hypocrisy, malice, and animosity; what workings up against everything holy and godly. These are crooked things, for they are opposed to that sincerity and godly fear which have been implanted by grace in his heart. His path, too, in providence may be very crooked. He may be linked to a very crooked partner, whose wretched temper daily tries his mind; or have crooked children, whom he can neither control by kindness nor persuade by counsel. He may himself have a very crooked temper, continually manifesting itself, if not in words, yet in the rising up of angry thoughts and feelings which he cannot prevent or subdue. His daily lot may be cast with persons who are, to use a familiar term, extremely aggravating—whose delight

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and pleasure are to put him off his guard, and to provoke him to anger, and thus bring guilt upon his conscience. His very position may expose him to peculiar temptations. He may, for months be placed in a situation where there is a daily snare; where his eyes are continually wandering after evil, and where Satan, as in the case of Joseph, is ever thrusting some temptation into his path, that might, but for God's grace, prove his utter downfall. These are some of the crooked things which have to be made straight. Or he may have sinned in a peculiar way. Under circumstances of peculiar and powerful temptation, he may have been overcome, and thus have brought great distress upon his conscience. And this sad fall has made everything else so crooked without and within that they seem almost to defy the very power and love of God to straighten.

iv. But there are “rough places to be made plain.” In providence, his path may be rough; many thorns may grow in the road; he may have many domestic trials that are to him constant sources of vexation and pain. He may have poverty and sickness—a heavy debt owing to his baker and a long bill with his doctor, an afflicted wife, and little children who cannot work and must be fed. If in business he may be continually in difficulties from scanty capital and frequent losses. These are “rough places” in providence; but he may have rougher in grace. Wherever he goes, whatever he does, there may be a stumbling block set in his path; his road may become more and more perplexing; thorns and briars may grow thicker and denser, so that every step he takes he treads upon a thorn, and every time he moves his feet he lacerates them with a briar. In dark nights he may stumble over rough stumbling-stones; and only now and then, as the sun shines, does he tread the road heavenward with pleasure.

Now all these valleys, mountains, crooked things, and rough places are in the sovereign appointment and by the special direction of God; and it is their removal that proves the greatness of his power and love. If in your road heavenward, no valley never sank before you; if no mountain and hill never rose up in sight; if you encountered

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no crooked path through the dense wood; and no rough places, with many a rolling stone and many a thorny briar in the tangled forest, it would not seem that you were treading the way which the saints of God have ever trod, nor would it appear as if you needed special help from the sanctuary, or any peculiar power to be put forth for your help and deliverance. But being in this path, and that by God's own appointment, and finding right before your eyes valleys of deep depression which you cannot raise up; mountains and hills of difficulties that you cannot lay low; crooked things which you cannot straighten; and rough places which you cannot make smooth, you are compelled, from felt necessity, to look for help from above. These perplexing difficulties, then, are the very things that make yours a case for the gospel, yours a state of mind to which salvation by grace is thoroughly adapted, yours the very condition of soul to which the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is altogether suitable. So that if you could at the present moment view these trials with spiritual eyes, and feel that they were all appointed by unerring wisdom and eternal love, and were designed for the good of your soul, you would rather bless God that your pathway was so cast in providence and grace that you had now a valley, now a mountain, now a crook, and now a thorn. And even as regards the present experience of your soul, you would feel that these very difficulties in the road were all productive of so many errands to the throne—that they all called upon you, as with so many speaking voices, to beg of the Lord that he would manifest himself in love to your heart. We all want ease; we love a smooth path. We should like to be carried to heaven in a palanquin; to enjoy every comfort that earth can give or heart desire, and then, dying without a pang of body or mind, find ourselves safe in heaven. But this is not God's way. The word of truth, the sufferings of Christ, and the universal experience of the saints, all testify against the path of ease; all testify for the path of trial; they all proclaim, as with one united voice, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction"—and this is

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the way of ease and of that prosperity which destroys fools (Prov. 1:32); but "strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life"—and this is the path of suffering and sorrow.

II.—But I pass on to show how all this is necessary for the revelation of the glory of the Lord; and how, when the glory of the Lord is revealed, it exalts the valley, lays low the mountain, makes the crooked straight, and every rough place plain.

The revelation of the glory of the Lord was primarily and especially seen in the coming of Christ in the flesh. When Jesus came "in the likeness of sinful flesh," it was a manifestation of the glory of God. As we read in the gospel of John (1:18), "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." God being essentially invisible, for not only hath no man seen, but no man can see him (1 Tim. 6:16), his glory can only be made known in the person of a Mediator who, as his only begotten Son, is "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person." (Heb. 1:3.) It was the view of this glory which drew his disciples to his feet, as holy John speaks, "And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." This glory, it is true, the world never saw, as the Apostle declares—"Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8); for it was a spiritual glory, only revealed to the saints of God. The glory of Christ in his first appearance in the flesh was to be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." His humiliation veiled his glory; but his Person was in itself unspeakably glorious as God-Man; his work was infinitely glorious, as the perfect obedience of a Son; his sufferings were glorious, as endured in conformity to the will of God; his death was glorious, though in outward aspect so ignominious, as thereby destroying death and him who had the power of it, that is the devil (Heb. 2:14); his resurrection was glorious, as he was thereby declared to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4); his ascension and sitting at the right hand of the Father was glorious, for there he

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entered into his glory (Luke 24:26); and his second coming will be glorious, for then he and his saints will appear together in glory. (Col. 3:4.)

But not only was the revelation of Christ in the flesh in itself unutterably glorious, but there is—what I am especially aiming at—the revelation of this glory in its measure to the soul. And this is when Christ is spiritually and inwardly revealed by the power of God; as Paul speaks, in his own case—”But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me.” (Gal. 1:15, 16.) And again, as the experience of all believers—”For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Cor. 4:6.) When, then, we have some manifestation of the beauty and blessedness, the blood, love, and salvation of the great and glorious incarnate God, then “the glory of the Lord” is revealed inwardly in the soul, as well as outwardly in the Person of Christ and the word of his grace. Now it is this, and this only, which fully and thoroughly exalts the valley, lays low the mountain and hill, makes every crooked place straight, and every rough place plain.

Let us, then, now see, one by one, how it accomplishes those blessed effects.

1. You, or at least some of you, as I before endeavoured to open up have had many things in times past, or it may be at the present moment, very deeply to try your mind. Your bereavements and family afflictions have been or are very distressing; your losses in providence have very much exercised your mind; your sins at times have been or still are a great burden to your conscience; your doubts and fears have sorely harassed you; and you have had many painful exercises, and may still have them, whether you are a child of God at all. Now you want something to come from the Lord himself into your soul to relieve you from this depression, from this pain and exercise, this grief and sorrow, this sinking of heart; that shall do for you what is spoken of in our text—”exalt

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the valley.” You want this bereavement filled up; this wound in your conscience healed; this painful exercise of mind removed; and something given to you that shall be firm and solid—a path in which you may walk without doubt or fear, guilt or bondage. These troubles and trials in themselves give you no evidence of sonship; you cannot build a hope for eternity upon doubts and fears, guilt of conscience, and distress of soul. It is with the heart as with the natural soul: the marsh and the morass, the filthy ditch and the slimy pool lodge in the depression of the valley, but do not make the ground solid, or fill it up with firm, sound material. You saw, you felt, you still see and feel, that your troubles, trials, sorrows, losses, bereavements, do not bring into your soul the grace of God; on the contrary, that they produce or foster peevishness, murmuring, rebellion, unbelief, infidelity. This scum and filth of our depraved nature settled, worked, heaved, and fermented in the lower grounds of your soul. In all this there was nothing solid. What wise man builds a house in a morass or a quaking bog? What godly man can build for eternity on doubt and fear? You wanted, therefore, something solid that you could rest upon, as satisfying you that your sins were pardoned, and that the Lord was your everlasting portion. Now when the glory of the Lord is revealed—when Christ is made spiritually and experimentally known—when his Person is viewed by the eye of faith, his blood seen, his obedience looked unto, and a measure of his love and mercy felt, these divine and solid realities fill every aching void, supply every deficiency, make up every loss, remove guilt and bondage, and thus give solid ground for rest, and peace, and happiness.

2. Again: this “mountain,” that stood perhaps for months before you, and which you thought never could be lowered; those amazing outward difficulties that surrounded you when you first began to make a profession; that contempt of the world that you felt you could hardly bear; those fears lest if you went on in this religion, you would have to sacrifice all your respectability, your position in life, and perhaps the little money you had got together:

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this mountain and hill that stood so long in your way, why, what was it, where is it when you experience any discovery of the beauty and blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ? It falls in a moment of itself; and you wonder that you could ever have made a mountain of it. "Every mountain and hill shall be laid low."

So with your hard heart—your stony, rocky, unfeeling soul. Let there be only some discovery of Christ—some revelation of the glory of God—some manifestation of his love, and grace, and blood: down goes the hard heart! The rock is removed out of its place (Job 14:18); the stone is rolled away from the door of the sepulchre; the mountain flows down at his presence, and melts like the snow-wreath in spring before the Sun of righteousness. Every difficulty, outward and inward, is now removed. You can now bear reproach, endure persecution, submit to every trial in providence and in grace. You can feel a solemn pleasure in casting your lot amongst the saints of God, for you now esteem them as the excellent of the earth. Having Christ, in him you have a basis of peace—a solid foundation on which to stand in life and death, time and eternity. And thus you find every mountain and hill blessedly laid low.

3. And your crooked path! That crook in your lot—that dispensation so peculiarly trying which has grieved you over and over again; those painful and perplexing circumstances, which have given such a colour to your whole life, that you would have prevented or altered at any sacrifice, but cannot; those crooked things which every day lie in your path, and which are so awry that the more you try to straighten them, the more crooked they become;—let there be a revelation of the glory of the Lord to your soul; let there be a sweet testimony in your conscience that you are accepted in the Beloved, that your sins are cast behind his back, and that you are an "heir of God and a joint heir with Christ:" where are your crooks then? Your crooked temper itself, that crookedest of all crooks, becomes straightened; everything is now right; you would not have a single thing altered; the whole way

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in which you have been led is a way of wisdom and mercy from beginning to end; and you would not have a single thing different to what it has been and now is. The trial was very painful at the time; it was a heavy cross, and you sometimes thought you could never live through it. But now you can say—"Bless God for it! He supported me under it, brought me through it, and I would not have one thing different from what it has been either in providence or in grace." But you cannot truly and honestly say this except you have been, or are now favoured with a revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. What is the mind of man—of any man—of your mind, my mind, under affliction? Let him be tried with pain of body, poverty of circumstances, sickness in his family, guilt of conscience, hard bondage in his own soul, without any beam of divine light upon his path, and what is he? A murmuring, rebellious wretch, without a grain of resignation, without a particle of contentment or submission to the will of God. But let the glory of the Lord be revealed; let him have a view by faith of a suffering Jesus; let some ray of light shine upon his path; let there be some breaking in of the exceeding weight of glory that is to be manifested at Christ's appearing: where are all his crooked things now? All made straight. But how? By his crooked will—crooked because it did not lie level with the Lord's—being made to harmonise with the promise and precept, the footsteps and example of the blessed Jesus. The crook is not taken out of the lot, but straightened in the lot; the cross is not removed from the shoulder, but strength—that strength which is "made perfect in weakness"—is given to bear it. So it was with Christ himself in the garden and on the cross; so it is with the believing followers of the crucified One.

4. But how does the Lord "make the rough places plain?" That rough and rugged road, where stumbling-blocks were so thickly strewed; the unbelief and infidelity of your heart; the suggestions of Satan and the workings of your own reasoning mind, which entangled you in such a maze; the briars and thorns which so lacerated your feet,—what becomes of these rough places when

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the glory of the Lord is revealed? All these stumbling-blocks are removed in a moment; unbelief is silenced; infidelity is put to flight; Satan slinks discomfited away; the reasoning mind bows to the force of the Spirit's inward witness; what was difficult to understand becomes easy to believe; and the intricate mazes where reason was lost are made plain to a childlike spirit. Nothing can stand the Lord's presence and power. When these are felt, what obstacle will not give way? what valley will then not be exalted? what mountain and hill not then be made low? what crooked path not then be made straight; and what rough place not then be made plain? But it is only the revelation of the glory of the Lord that does this; and without it the valley will still be a valley, the mountain still be a mountain, the crooked place still be crooked, and the rough place still rough. What need have we, then, to be looking up to the Lord, that he would manifest Himself in love to our soul!

III.—Now comes the solemn declaration from the Lord's own mouth—"And all flesh shall see it together." I take the word "flesh" in two senses. "All flesh," in its widest signification, comprehends all who are in the flesh; that is, all the sons and daughters of Adam. "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). In this sense, "all flesh" shall see the glory of God; that is, at the day of judgment, the great day of account, they shall see the glory of God in his justice, who do not see the glory of God in his mercy. "Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right?" When the glory of the Lord shall be revealed—when Christ shall come with all his saints—when he shall sit upon the great white throne, and gather all nations before him, shall not all flesh then see him? As we read—"Every eye shall see him and they also which pierced him." When the dead, small and great, stand before God—when the books are opened, and the dead are "judged out of those things which were written in the books

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according to their works" (Rev. 20:12), the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it. An incarnate God shall sit upon the throne of judgment; and those who have lived and died in their sins shall call upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. But they shall call in vain; for the indignant Majesty of heaven shall blaze forth in a million flashes of lightning, and they shall hear their sentence pealed in the tones of a million thunders. And thus "all flesh shall see the glory of the Lord," some to their eternal joy, and others to their everlasting sorrow.

But we may also understand the words "all flesh" as embracing, in a more limited sense, all the people of God in the flesh—the saints of the Most High now in their mortal bodies, who are still encompassed with all the sins and sorrows and infirmities of the flesh. The apostle, therefore, speaks of "living in the flesh," and "abiding in the flesh" (Phil. 1:22, 24), as expressing his continuance in the body. In this sense, the saints of God in their present time-state, in their mortal condition, before they pass from time into eternity, shall all see the glory of the Lord; there shall be a revelation of the glory of Christ to their souls, which they shall see below by faith, before they see it above by sight face to face. Now is not this what your soul is seeking after? And do you not find that without this you can get no solid rest nor peace? Is not your eye from time to time looking upward for some discovery of the glory of Christ to your soul? Is not your heart every now and then stretching itself up to the everlasting hills, that there may be some breaking in of heavenly light, some gracious discovery of the power and presence of the Lord Jesus? Are you not longing for some believing view of the Son of God—for some application of his atoning blood to your conscience—for some shedding abroad of his love to your soul—for some visitation of his Spirit and grace to your heart? Is all dark and dreary without the presence of Christ? Is all cold and lifeless unless you feel your heart in some measure, touched and

softened by the word of his grace? If you have ever seen anything of the glory of the Lord, you will want to see it again; if you have ever felt the presence of Christ, you will want to feel it again; and if you have ever known what his power can do, what his blood can save from, and what his Spirit can in a moment produce, you will want again and again a renewal of this heavenly blessing, that you may have a firm and solid evidence of your interest in the love and blood of the Lamb, have every guilty doubt and fear chased away, and your whole soul filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

IV.—But I now come to my last point, the ratification that God has given that all these things shall most surely come to pass: “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” More than seven hundred years before Christ came into the world, God spake these words by his servant Isaiah, and he fulfilled what he spake. The son of God did come in the flesh; the glory of the Lord was revealed; and all flesh did see it together by the miracles that he wrought, the gracious words that he spake, the holy life that he lived, and the suffering death which, according to the clear language of prophecy, he died. But in a more special manner did those behold his glory “who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” Not one jot or one tittle of God’s word can pass away. The word that is gone out of his mouth in righteousness shall not return void. And this word the mouth of the Lord hath spoken for your consolation, ye saints of God, ye children of the Most High. You are waiting for the Lord to appear to your soul “more than they that watch for the morning.” Often in the night season are you looking up to his blessed Majesty, that he would himself speak a healing, reconciling, comforting word with power to your heart. Many an inward sigh, cry, and groan come up to him whose ears are ever open, and many a secret prayer is spread out before these holy and gracious eyes which neither slumber nor sleep. You may often, left to yourselves, have to grope in darkness—thick, Egyptian darkness, that may be felt; but that very darkness makes you feel your need of light. The cry

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of the Church has always been—”Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.” You may often feel as if immersed in the very shadow of death, and say with Heman—”I am counted with them that go down into the pit; I am a man that has no strength” (Psalm 88:4); but the very feelings of death—the chill at your heart, and the cold sweat upon your brow—make you long for the appearance of him who is the Resurrection and the Life; and who can in one moment whisper—”Fear not; I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and death.” You may be pressed down at times with the power of unbelief, and think and say there never was a heart like yours, so unable to believe, so doubting at every step; but this deep conviction of your wretched unbelief, which is the Spirit’s work to show (John 16:9), only makes you long for that living faith of which Christ himself is not only the Object, but the Author and Finisher. You may be sunk at times in despondency, as to both your present and future state; but that makes you the more desire to have a good hope through grace, as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast. You may feel at times the guilt, and not only the guilt, but the dreaded power and prevalence of sin; but that only makes you long the more earnestly for manifestations of pardon and peace, and that no sin may have dominion over you. “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it,” that sooner or later you shall have every needful blessing. The valley you now feel shall be exalted; the mountain and hill shall be made low: the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and your eyes shall see the glory of the Lord Christ shall be made precious to your heart; he will come sooner or later into your soul; and then when he comes he will manifest himself as your Lord and your God. And so you keep hanging, and hoping, and looking up until he appears; for your heart is still ever saying,

“None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.”

Here, then, we must leave it in his gracious hands who hath not said unto the seed of Jacob—”Seek ye me in vain.” “Hath he said,

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and shall he not do it; hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

165 Reconciliation and Salvation

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day
Morning,
May 16, 1858

*"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by
the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall
be saved by his life."*

Romans 5:10

There are two points of divine truth on which the Scriptures are very express and plain, and yet both of them are most stoutly resisted by the pride and self-righteousness of man's heart. These two truths are the completeness of the fall, and the equal or more than equal completeness of the recovery. Neither of these truths, though for different reasons, is palatable to man's self-righteous nature. As to the first, the depth of the fall, how few are willing to admit that man is in such a state as the word of God describes him to be—"dead in trespasses and sins;" "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart;" "serving divers lusts and pleasures;" "living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another;" "having no hope, and without God in the world." But how plainly are all these evil fruits traced up in the Scriptures to their parent stock—the Adam fall. How clear on this point is the language of the apostle: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death," not only naturally but spiritually, "passed upon all men for that [or "in whom," margin] all have sinned;" "through the offence of one many be dead;" "the judgment was by one to condemnation;" "by one man's offence death reigned by one;" "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation;" "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners." (Rom. 5.) And yet

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these positive and express declarations of Scripture are so opposed to that natural principle which exists in all of us, that though, to a certain degree, maimed by the fall, yet we are not so thoroughly helpless as not to be able to do something to please God and obtain salvation, that they ever will be exposed to all the desperate rebellion that man's wicked heart is capable of manifesting. It is true that from a kind of traditional respect for the Scriptures there is a bridle in the jaws of many which prevents them from speaking against them; but when the truth contained in them is brought forth and enforced in other language, then it is that the enmity manifests itself. In a similar way, the other grand and glorious truth which is the correlative of the first, the completeness of the recovery, the perfection of the finished work of Christ, the full atonement which he has made by his bloodshedding and death, is as much opposed as the depth of the fall, because it equally stands in the way of that self-righteousness which is innate in every man's disposition. See how it cuts both ways. If I can do something toward my own salvation, then the fall is not complete; for it has left me some power. If I can do something for my own salvation, then the recovery is not complete; for to become effectual it needs my co-operation. But how plainly has the Holy Ghost revealed not only the depth and completeness of the fall, but the height and completeness of the recovery. The apostle, in the chapter before us, ascribes justification to the obedience of Christ as plainly as condemnation to the disobedience of Adam, summing up the contrast he has drawn between the two covenant heads in these words of truth and power: "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Rom. 5:17, 18, 19.)

In the words of our text, we find him seeking to encourage the desponding saints of God, by laying before them what Christ has already done, and what he still lives to do. It is the summing up of the argument laid down in the preceding verses. The main point which he enforces, and whereby he sets off the wondrous love of God, is that “when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” The death of Christ and that for “the ungodly” is the key-note of his melodious theme—the grand fundamental truth of the gospel—on which he insists and enforces with all the strength of his pen. From this gospel doctrine he draws a no less gospel conclusion, that thereby God “commendeth,” or, as the word means, “recommendeth,” “his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” He would thus to the utmost of his power enhance and set before our eyes the greatness of the love of God; that this love was not to “the righteous man,” of whom he had spoken in the preceding verse, if indeed such a one could be found; nor for “the good,” that is, the kind, benevolent man for whom some would even dare to die; but that it flowed so freely forth towards us while we were yet sinners that he sent his only begotten Son to die for us. He would thus open a door of hope for every sensible sinner who is led by divine teaching into an experimental acquaintance with the depth of the fall, and encourage him to come to God as he is, in all his sin and shame, that he may receive mercy from the hand of him whose name and nature are love. He then goes on still further to encourage the drooping saints of God by pointing out to them the fruits of justification by the obedience and bloodshedding of Christ and the way in which it makes salvation sure: “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” The saints of God are justified, that is, are accounted righteous, through the blood of Christ; and though it may seem at first sight unusual language, yet it perfectly harmonises with an expression in the same chapter: “By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (verse 19); for the bloodshedding and

sacrifice of Christ were a part of this obedience. Thus by setting before them that they are already in a state of justification and acceptance before God; that the blood shed upon the cross is their plea and title to eternal bliss—a plea and title that never can be set aside by the curse and condemnation of the Law or the accusations of Satan and a guilty conscience, he encourages them to believe that they shall be fully saved, and are in fact already saved from the wrath to come.

But this glorious and most encouraging truth he sets forth more fully in the words of our text, as the general summing up of the preceding argument: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”

In bringing before you what I seem to see and feel as the spiritual and experimental interpretation of these words, I shall, with God’s help and blessing, divide our subject into two leading branches, showing, under the first, the reconciliation of enemies; and, under the second, the salvation of friends.

I.—First, the reconciliation of enemies.

i. What language can describe more fully or forcibly the lost, ruined, undone condition of man by nature than the declaration from the mouth of an inspired apostle that he is an enemy of God? Have we ever considered the depth and meaning of that pointed and pregnant expression? Have we ever viewed it in the light of God’s countenance and seen in that pure, holy, and heavenly light what it is to be an enemy of the great God of heaven and earth? Let us endeavour, then, as the Lord the Spirit may graciously enable us, to devote a few moments to the consideration of this point, for only as we are led into an experimental acquaintance with it, humbling though it maybe to our pride or painful to our conscience, can we see or feel any grace or glory in the reconciliation which has been effected by the bloodshedding and death of Jesus.

But how came this to pass? What brought us into this miserable condition? God did not make man his enemy. On the contrary, he

made him upright, in his own image, after his own likeness. Here was friendship, not enmity. But what a depth of condescension was it in God to breathe into man an immortal soul, bearing in every feature and lineament a visible representation of the purity and perfection of himself, that is, so far as a created, and therefore finite and limited being was capable of it. Man thus made in the image of God was God's friend. God walked with, and talked with him in the garden of Eden; and acceptable were his visits, for a divine familiarity came with them, and such a mutual intercourse as a pure and innocent man could maintain with a condescending God. Standing in his created purity and native innocence, Adam had no alarming apprehension of the majesty of God, for there was no bar between him and his Maker, any more than there is now in the angels who ever stand in his presence. But ah! how soon the scene changed: how Satan envied man's happiness; how determined that old enemy the Serpent was to make a breach between God and man who seemed in his eyes raised to occupy a place in God's favour from which he himself had fallen; and how fearfully, through God's permission, he succeeded by planting, through the subtle medium of temptation, in the breast of man the same evil root of wickedness that had struck so deeply into his own being, degrading and polluting a pure angel of light into a foul fiend of darkness. Sin being thus, as it were, infused into the heart of man, broke up that friendship which existed between the Creator and the creature, and hurled man down into a state of enmity and alienation from the Author of his being. God did not put enmity into man's heart; God was not the author of man's sin. Satan was the author of the whole. Yes, it was the old enemy, the Serpent, who injected sin as a secret and subtle poison into man's nature, which was created pure and yet subject to fall, and by this infusion of sin, introduced that enmity and alienation into his heart, which constituted him an enemy of God. Let us be clear here. Satan himself could have had no power of introducing sin into man's heart but through the medium of temptation. Though

I have spoken figuratively of the injection and infusion of sin; I do not mean thereby that Satan infused sin into man's nature as a venomous serpent by a sudden bite introduces poison into the blood of a bitten man. He rather, to change the figure, presented a cup to man's lips, which seemed sweet and good, but really contained deadly poison. It was the free act of man to take and drink it in disobedience to the revealed will of God. Thus, though Satan was the tempter, and man the tempted, yet, by yielding to the temptation, man sinned by a voluntary act, and so became a personal transgressor. Now this sin, with all the alienation and enmity consequent upon it, has been handed down from our fallen ancestor to us. We are born into this world enemies of God, what I may call natural enemies, because we bear the same corrupt nature that Adam had when "he begat a son in his own image, after his own likeness."

ii. But have you ever considered what it is to be an enemy of God, and what it means and implies? It is to be at war with all the perfections of God, nay more, with the very Person of the Almighty. Such is man by nature and practice. Such are we, every one of us as born into this world,—at open or secret, direct or implied war against the Majesty of heaven, and against all those glorious perfections whereby God is what he is. Thus, man by nature, is at war against God's holiness, for his heart and life are unholy, unclean, polluted, and vile; and as such, he is at war with the spotless purity and holiness of God, as opposed to the corruption and uncleanness of his heart. There always is a war, express or implied, between opposites. Filth is at war with cleanliness, drunkenness with sobriety, unchastity with purity, falsehood with truth, covetousness with liberality, pride with humility, ungodliness with godliness. Similarly, man by nature is at war against God's justice, for he is ever doing the things that the Law, which is the declaration of God's justice, expressly and positively forbids, and never does a single thing that it with equal authority commands. He is at war with God's omnipresence,

daily committing those iniquities which God's presence, were it known in his soul, would effectually prevent. He is an enemy to God's omniscience, as living in ignorance and contempt of that omniscient eye which reads every secret thought of his heart, and is privy to every act performed by his hands; and to that omniscient ear which hears every idle, and worse than idle word, continually issuing from his lips. He is at war against God's truth; for he hates it with a determined hatred. He is an enemy to God's people; for he persecutes them and despises them to the utmost of his power. And he hates God's word, because it condemns him; and he knows if he were to live under its power and influence he must give up those practices which that word condemns.

But you, or some of you say, "I am sure I am not that character: I am not an enemy of God." O, my friend, it is because you do not know yourself; it is because there is a veil of unbelief and self-righteousness over your heart, which hides yourself from yourself. Did you see what you were by nature; if you had a right view of what your carnal mind really is, you would confess with the apostle it was "enmity against God; that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Could you read your heart as God scans it with his omniscient eye, you would see nothing but enmity against God there. You would see that your heart by nature hates what God loves, and loves what God hates. And can there be a greater proof of enmity than that? You would see that your inclinations and desires, thoughts and affections were all at war against every perfection of heaven; and can there be a greater mark of enmity than to be bent on doing what God abhors? You would find your will totally opposed to the revealed will of God; and can there be a greater mark of enmity than a will diametrically opposite? You would find there was no love in your soul for God or godliness; no love for heaven and holiness; no love for God's truth and the perfections of his adorable Majesty; no love for Christ or his people; but, on the contrary, you would find nothing but enmity, rebellion, pride, and self-righteousness lurking and

working in its lowest depths. You must not think because you are moral and upright, correct in your outward walk, and consistent in all the relations of life, that you are not by nature an enemy of God. Neutrality in this warfare is enmity. Not to be on Christ's side is to be against Christ; not to be separate from God's enemies is to be God's enemy; not to love him is to hate him, and not to be his is to be Satan's. The Lord, if it be his will, give you light to see there are but two classes—enemies and friends, children of God, or children of the wicked one.

But this state of enmity and alienation from God we have each to learn for ourselves by personal experience; and until we learn thus, in some measure, what we are by nature and practice—enemies of God by wicked works, we never shall be able to enter into that wondrous way of reconciliation which God has revealed in the Scriptures of truth, and which he makes known with a divine power to all whom he brings within the bonds of the Covenant.

iii. This leads me to the "reconciliation" spoken of in our text as effected by the death of God's dear Son. Good men use the expression sometimes "a reconciled God;" and there is a sense in which it may be properly used. There being an alienation between God and man, there being enmity on man's part and righteous indignation on the part of God against sin, there was a necessity that this anger of God should be appeased. The anger in the bosom of God was not against the persons of the elect, for being chosen in Christ and viewed complete in him, they were ever "accepted in the beloved." But sin having made a breach between God and them, the anger of the Almighty was justly due to their transgressions, and needed to be appeased or pacified before it could cease. Thus the church says, "Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." (Isai. 12:1.) So the Lord speaks, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (Isai. 54:8); thus he says also in Ezekiel, "When I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord

God.” (Ezekiel 16:63.) These, and similar expressions, show that there is a sense, a sound and Scriptural sense, in which God may be called “a reconciled God,” and when so used, I have no objection to the expression. And yet I freely confess I prefer to speak as the Scripture speaks here of our being reconciled to God, rather than of God being reconciled to us: “If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.”

What a glorious flood of light does this throw upon that wondrous scheme of eternal love and superabounding grace whereby God’s enemies became God’s friends. Let us endeavour to enter into the nature and efficacy of this reconciliation.

1. The first thing that the word reconciliation implies is that there was a previous state of friendship, and that this friendship had been broken up, and, as a consequence, been converted into enmity. This, however, we have already seen. It implies also a healing of that breach, a making it up again, and a restoration to the same or greater state of friendship.

Now the first thing necessary was to reconcile the persons of these natural enemies of God as having become inimical to God’s justice and holiness. Sin had defiled them individually, and personally made them loathsome and abominable. Sin had brought them individually under the stroke of God’s justice, so that the demands of a righteous law opened to them the door of hell and shut against them the gate of heaven. Sin also, as a polluted thing, had contaminated them from head to foot, clothed them in filthy garments, so as to render them unclean in body and soul, and, as such, unfit to enter into the pure courts of heavenly bliss.

This is beautifully typified in the forlorn child spoken of in Ezekiel (16.), “cast out in the open field to the loathing of its person in the day that it was born.” Though a child, and a beloved child, its native filth made its person loathsome. So with Joshua, the High Priest, who was “a brand plucked out of the fire,” and yet “stood clothed with filthy garments.” Until his iniquity was

caused to pass from him, his person was loathsome, on account of his loathsome garments. (Zech. 3.) The persons, then of the people of God needed to be reconciled; and this they were through the atoning blood of God’s dear Son. This made John say, “Unto him that loved us and washed us” that is, our persons, “from our sins in his own blood.” (Rev. 1:5.) “And such were some of you; but ye are washed.” (Cor. 6:11.)

This reconciliation is for the sins of God’s own people through the bloodshedding of his dear Son, and thus an atonement was made for them, that is, a satisfaction to the justice of God which had been, as it were, injured and offended by their transgressions. Thus, there was a reconciliation betwixt the apparent jarring attributes of God, such as his justice and holiness, which would condemn, and his love, mercy and grace, which would save. Sin had caused the breach, sin had produced the enmity; and therefore when by the full satisfaction of Christ, sin was atoned for, put away, blotted out, and cast behind God’s back, reconciliation was effected. Now nothing but the infinite wisdom, pure grace, and sovereign power of God could have devised, brought to light, or carried through this way of reconciliation for those who were his born and natural enemies. The first movement was on God’s part to us, not on our part towards him. Reconciliation was in his bosom, not in ours. Mercy was in his heart towards us when we had no mercy upon ourselves nor indeed any sense of our need of it. The whole plan of salvation was devised from eternity in the mind of God and carried out in the incarnation of his dear Son before we here present had birth or being. Thus the whole of the work, from first to last, was devised in the purposes of eternal love and executed by the hands of omnipotent power.

But having seen a little into the meaning of the word “reconciliation,” let us endeavour to look at the way in which it was carried into execution. This the apostle declares was effected by the death of God’s Son, his true, proper, and eternal Son. This is in full harmony with the whole current of sacred writ. We therefore

read of God “sending his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10); of “not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up for us all” (Rom. 8:32); of his “bearing our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:24); of his “putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb. 9:28); of his “having by his own blood obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb. 9:12); of his being “wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities;” of his “bearing the sin of many, and making intercession for the transgressors.” Thus by the incarnation, sufferings, and sacrifice of the Son of God and by taking our nature into union with his own divine Person, and in that nature, suffering, bleeding and dying, he reconciled those who were by transgression enemies to God and godliness. Thus also, by his mediation he reconciled all the perfections of God, some of which seem to clash, as his justice and holiness on one side, and his love, mercy, and grace on the other. Justice called for its victims, demanding its just due. Mercy, as pure mercy, apart from justice, would have spared the transgressor, but justice could not give up its rights. And yet the perfections of God must suffer no tarnish or diminution. Each must have its own unsullied, unimpaired lustre. Now the Lord Jesus Christ by his incarnation, mediation, sacrifice, bloodshedding, and death reconciled these apparent jarring attributes of God, and thus made mercy and truth to meet together, righteousness and peace to kiss each other. He put himself into our place, standing under the weight of our transgressions and sins, and thus by exposing his own precious body and soul to the strokes of the sword of God’s wrath, he received in his own person the strokes of that wrath due to us. God therefore said by the prophet, “Awake O sword against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.” (Zech. 13.) As then he voluntarily undertook to endure in his own Person the wrath against sin which must otherwise have fallen upon us, his sufferings, bloodshedding, and sacrifice were acceptable to God, a sweet savour that rose up into his nostrils; not that God took delight in the sufferings of his dear

Son, as sufferings, but he delighted in the obedience to his will thus manifested, according to the words, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.” When, then, he had finished the work which God gave him to do, and had put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, reconciliation was effected and accomplished. It was this of which the angel Gabriel spoke to Daniel, “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness” (Dan. 9:24), all which were effected by the bloodshedding, obedience, and death of the Son of God.

Now there was no other way whereby enemies could be reconciled. It will be our wisdom and mercy to ponder over this solemn truth, and to view it in its various bearings. And first, in what a dreadful state of enmity and alienation must sin have placed us as enemies to God, if we could be reconciled to him by no other means but that his only begotten Son should die for our sins. How awful must those iniquities be which demanded such a bloodshedding and such a death as this! What eternal hatred must God have to sin so to punish it in the Person of the Son of his love; yet, what eternal love must he have to the persons of his elect, to send his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to reconcile them unto himself, and to make them partakers of his own holiness. Could any other way have been devised, that way would have been chosen; but all the wisdom of God could contrive and choose no other. And so far as our faith can embrace the great mystery of godliness, we clearly see that no other way but this could have reconciled the jarring attributes of God. By no other way could the Law have been fulfilled, or the claims of divine justice satisfied; by no other way could grace have superabounded over the aboundings of sin; by no other way could the wondrous love of God and of his dear Son have been made manifest; and by no other way could the love and obedience of the people of God have been effectually secured.

iv. Now we have to learn these things experimentally for ourselves; and the first lesson usually taught us in the school of Christ, and a most painful lesson it is, is that we, by nature and practice, are enemies to God and godliness. We have to be taught by the blessed Spirit the evil of sin in our own conscience, and to feel the working of enmity against God in our own carnal mind; and thus to learn painfully for ourselves the havoc and ruin that sin has made in and of us. It is a fearful discovery, when first made known to the soul, to find ourselves enemies to God; that as such we are in his hands for life and death; that we have sinned against the Majesty of heaven, and are justly doomed to die; that his law makes no allowance for human infirmity, but exacts its full demands to the utmost penny; that when we look up we see nothing but an angry God, and when we look down see nothing but an opening hell; when we look within find nothing but sin morning, noon, and night; and when we look around us for help, find no help or refuge in man or minister, the church or the world. This is a most painful discovery; yet it opens a way to learn most effectually, because most experimentally, how the sinner is reconciled to God. For the Lord the Spirit in due time enlightens the eyes of the understanding to see the way of salvation through the bloodshedding and obedience of the Son of God; and thus seeing light in God's light, as one enlightened with the light of the living, he discovers that there is a salvation of which he had no previous idea, or at least no spiritual perception. By a ray of divine light he sees that there is a way whereby he may be reconciled, brought near, accepted, have his sins pardoned, and stand justified and acquitted, so as to be without spot or blemish before the throne of God. With this divine life and light, and as a consequence of it, there is a communicating and a drawing forth of a living faith in the Son of God. The soul is now made willing in the day of God's power; it submits itself, as the apostle speaks, unto the righteousness of God, which is attended with a believing with the heart unto righteousness. (Rom. 10:3-10.) A

reconciliation now takes place inwardly in the heart, springing out of the reconciliation already made by the death of God's dear Son. This is a receiving the reconciliation; or, as the apostle speaks, "receiving the atonement." (Rom. 5:11.) The word "atonement" there, means "reconciliation," as rendered in the margin, and indeed is the same term as is translated "reconciliation" in the text. This "receiving the atonement" is to receive it in faith, hope, and love into a believing and broken heart. It is a being willing to be saved, not in our own way but in God's way; approving of and delighting in the way of salvation through the bloodshedding and death of the Son of God, as revealed in the Scriptures and received into an enlightened understanding, a purged conscience, and a loving, humble, penitent spirit, the mouth confessing what the heart believes, and praising and blessing God for his manifested mercy. But short of this sweet assurance and filial confidence, there is also a receiving the atonement as suitable and desirable, attended with an inward testimony that if this is the way of salvation there is hope for me. With this there is a view of the beauty and blessedness of the Lord Jesus Christ as a suffering Immanuel, and a looking unto him as those who were bitten by serpents in the wilderness looked to the brazen serpent and were healed. There is also connected with this believing view of Jesus, a receiving into the heart the precious promises that hold forth salvation to those who look to him, according to his own words, "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else." And as love crowns the whole, and is the surest evidence of the new birth, there is a flowing forth of love and affection towards this bleeding Lamb of God, this man of sorrows, this suffering Saviour; an embracing of him and a cleaving to him with full purpose of heart, as all our hope and help, all our salvation and, all our desire.

v. We see, therefore, that "reconciliation" wears two aspects, and has two different relationships. One is external, the other internal. As a past act of satisfaction to the justice of God, it was once and for ever fully effected by the bloodshedding and death

of God's dear Son. This work is complete. Nothing can be taken away from it, nothing added to it. But there is a receiving this atonement into the heart, the effect of which is to reconcile the understanding by a divine light, to reconcile the conscience by the application of the blood of sprinkling, and to reconcile the affections by fixing them on the glorious Person of the Son of God as now at the right hand of the Father. As, then, this inward reconciliation takes place, there is a subduing of the ancient enmity, rebellion, and working of hard, obstinate thoughts and feelings against the Majesty of heaven, and a communication of meekness, humility, contrition, godly sorrow for sin, and love to the Lord and his people. Here is the peculiar blessedness of the gospel as it becomes the "power of God unto salvation;" and here we see the contrast between it and the law. The law reveals the wrath of God against sin, discovers the evils of the heart, but gives no remedy for them; lays bare the iniquity of every secret thought, but holds out no prospect of escape from the wrath to come. But the gospel comes in demonstration of the Spirit and power. It addresses us as a message from God, speaking by authority in his name, and says, "You are an enemy to God by wicked works; you are a sinner in thought, word, and deed; everything in you is opposed to the justice, holiness, and majesty of God. But there is salvation for poor sinners such as you, through the blood of Christ." "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.). "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." (1 John 5:11.) "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 1:1, 2.) It thus assures us that he has reconciled enemies to God; has put away their sins by his own bloodshedding upon the cross. And now having gone up on high, and sent his Spirit into the heart of his servants to preach the gospel of his grace, he speaks by them encouraging words to poor sinners, that they might come to him

and find in him rest and peace; still saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The gospel comes with these declarations, promises, and invitations, that there is salvation through Christ and no other. Now as "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," when the gospel comes with power, faith is raised up to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, to look unto him for salvation, to hope in his mercy; and as the gracious Lord is pleased to draw near in the manifestation of his blood and love, and to whisper some sweet promise into the heart, the enmity that was stirred up by the law against God with the rebellion, unbelief, prejudice, and self-righteousness, which had hitherto stood up as invincible obstacles in the way of believing, at the voice of mercy melt, break up, and disappear out of sight like the ice before the sun, and faith, hope, and love take their place. It is in this way that the soul is reconciled unto God, as the apostle speaks, "We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God;" that is, internally and experimentally, because it now receives the atonement, embracing the reconciliation effected by the death of God's dear Son. The word "atone," means "to make at one," that is, at one with God; and therefore to receive the atonement, is to receive the "atonement" of the way whereby God and man become "at one," or as one, in Christ.

Now have you ever felt these two things that must be experimentally known by every saint of God—enmity and reconciliation; your lost state by nature, and your salvation by grace; the fall and the recovery; the malady and the remedy; the wounding and the healing; that you have nothing in yourself but sin and misery; that you deserve the lowest hell; that in you there is neither hope nor help; and that if you live and die without a knowledge of Christ, you must sink into hell with all your sins upon your head? And yet there has been that manifestation to your soul of the Person and work, blood and righteousness, grace and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, which has not only enlightened your understanding but delighted your heart. Or if you cannot

rise up into the power of a full confidence, yet that you have seen that sweet suitability, that beauty and blessedness in the Lord Jesus Christ, which have raised up in your soul a living faith in him, shed abroad a love to his name, and given you a good hope through grace. If you can find this, you will be able to trace such a change in your heart and affections, that though you once were an enemy to God by wicked works, yet there is a reconciliation in your mind to his way, word, and will, a subduing of your unbelief, and a longing for a fuller and clearer testimony to your pardon and acceptance. If so, you are no longer an enemy, but a friend; no longer an alien from God, but one of his own dear family, even though you cannot claim the full enjoyment of the relationship, or cry, "Abba, Father."

II.—But we pass on to the declaration from the mouth of an inspired apostle, the salvation of friends.

i. The apostle says, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Then they are already reconciled, for reconciliation is a past act: effected by the bloodshedding of Christ upon the cross, once for all, and cannot be repeated. When he shed his atoning blood as a sacrifice for sin, and laid down his precious life as a ransom price, reconciliation was then thoroughly effected. It is a finished work, and was so proclaimed by his dying lips. The church was then reconciled to God, and in a sense God reconciled to her; for though God ever loved the Church as in union with his dear Son, there was a law-enmity which needed to be removed, and an anger against sin which required to be appeased. We may illustrate this by the case of David and Absalom. David loved Absalom and never ceased to love him, but he was justly displeased with his crime in slaying Amnon. But he was reconciled to him when Absalom submitted himself, and kissed him as a proof of it. (2 Sam. 14:33.) So God was justly displeased with the sins of his people; but his righteous anger was appeased by the obedience unto death of his dear Son,

and in this sense he became reconciled.

Now, as I have already explained, when we receive the atonement thus effected, and feel its power in our souls; when our conscience is sprinkled with the precious blood of Christ; when his love is shed abroad in the heart, and faith is raised up to embrace him as the Christ of God, then we are experimentally reconciled; then we are drawn near to God through the blood of Jesus Christ, and embrace him as our Father and Friend. But the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead; he triumphed over death and hell; he ascended to the right hand of the Father, and there sits as the great High Priest over the house of God, as the Mediator between God and man. As the apostle says, "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Now this is the benefit and blessing of Christ being at the right hand of the Father, that he lives to carry out and execute his own testament—that new testament or covenant of which he spoke at the last supper, "The cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20); or, as we read in Matthew, "This is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26:28.) You may make a will and die, leaving your property as you think secured and guarded by the strictest regulations. But can you guarantee that your executors will carry out your injunctions? Your property, when realised, may not be sufficient to pay your legacies; your trustees or executors may decline to act, or they may be fraudulent men, and your children and relatives may be cheated by them of their due rights, as has occurred over and over again. Or there may be some flaw or defect in your will as being improperly signed, or making a provision which the law does not allow; and thus all your death-bed intentions may be thoroughly frustrated. But how different it is with the New Testament or will of the Lord Jesus Christ. He made his own will, which he signed and sealed with his own blood, thus giving it eternal value and validity. And O how blessed the truth that he has risen to the right hand of God to be his own executor; so that he himself executes all the provisions of

his will. This blessed truth is contained in the words, “we are saved by his life.”

ii. Now if you know anything of yourself inwardly and experimentally of the evils of your heart, the power of sin, the strength of temptation, the subtlety of your unwearied foe, and the daily conflict betwixt nature and grace, the flesh and the Spirit, which is the peculiar mark of the living family of heaven, you will find and feel your need of salvation as a daily reality. Think not that the only salvation to be felt and known is salvation past—salvation accomplished by the bloodshedding and death of the Son of God. There is salvation present—an inward, experimental, and continual salvation communicated out of the fulness of Christ as a risen Mediator. Don't you want to be daily and almost hourly saved? But from what? Why, from everything in you that fights against the will and word of God. Sin is not dead in you. If you are reconciled and brought near to God; if you have an interest in the precious blood of Christ; if your name is written in the Lamb's book of life, and heaven be your eternal home, that does not deliver you from the indwelling of sin, nor from the power of sin either, except as grace gives you present deliverance from it. Sin still works in your carnal mind, and will work in it till your dying hour. What then you want to be saved from is the guilt, filth, power, love, and practice of that sin which ever dwells and ever works in you, and often brings your soul into hard and cruel bondage. Now Christ lives at the right hand of God for his dear people that he may be ever saving them by his life. There he reigns and rules as their glorious covenant Head, ever watching over, feeling for and sympathising with them, and communicating supplies of grace for the deliverance and consolation for all his suffering saints spread over the face of the earth. The glorious Head is in heaven, but the suffering members upon earth; and as he lives on their behalf, he maintains by his Spirit and grace his life in their soul, according to his own words, “Because I live ye shall live also.”

It is by this life that, in the words of our text, we are “saved;”

not that salvation is not already complete; not that anything remains for Christ in heaven to do, to make up that which was left undone in his work of redemption here below. That is not the meaning of the words. It is, so to speak, the handing down of that already accomplished salvation into our hearts—the ratifying of it in the court of conscience, the sealing of it with a divine power and influence upon the heart. We therefore read: “When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” (Ephes. 4:8.) In fact, upon the resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Christ hangs all the salvation of the church; for without it, redemption could not have been made effectual. The salvation, therefore, spoken of in our text is an experimental salvation, in a gracious communication of that divine light, life, and power which spring out of it. Now in order to realise this we need a life of faith—the life of which Paul speaks: “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20.) And this life of faith in Christ is as necessary to our present and experimental salvation as his death upon the cross was to our past and actual salvation. If you are alive to what you are as a poor, fallen sinner, you see yourself surrounded by enemies, temptations, sins, and snares; and you feel yourself utterly defenceless, as weak as water, without any strength to stand against them. Pressed down by the weight of unbelief, you see a mountain of difficulty before your eyes, sometimes in providence, sometimes in grace; sometimes as regards yourself, sometimes as regards others. You find too, that your heart is a cage of unclean birds, and that in you, that is, in your flesh there dwelleth no good thing; neither will nor power have you in yourself to fight or flee. How then shall this mountain become a plain? How shall you escape the snares and temptations spread in your path? How shall you get the better of all your enemies, external, internal, infernal, and reach heaven's gates safe at last? If you say, “By the salvation already accomplished,” are you sure that that salvation belongs to you? Where is the evidence of it

if you have no present faith in Christ? How can that past salvation profit you for present troubles unless there be an application of it? It is this application and manifestation of salvation which is being “saved by his life.” See how it works; and what a suitability is in it. You are all weakness, and he is and has all strength, which he makes perfect in your weakness. So Paul found it, which made him “glory in his infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon him.” You are all helplessness against sin, temptation, and a thousand foes. But help is laid upon him as one that is mighty; he therefore sends you help from the sanctuary and strengthens you out of Zion (Psalm 20:2), that these sins and enemies may not get the better over you. You often feel yourself cold, lifeless, and dead, and therefore need continual supplies of grace and strength to revive your soul, to make you believing, watchful, and prayerful. The Lord Jesus Christ, who lives at God’s right hand, has to send down supplies of his grace continually to keep your soul alive unto himself. Without this life being kept up and maintained by these continual supplies of his grace, you cannot pray, or read, or hear the word, or meditate with any feeling or profit. You cannot love the Lord and his blessed ways; you cannot submit to his righteous dealings; or bear the rod and him who appointed it. You may approach his throne, but your heart is cold, clouded, and unfeeling; your spirit sinks under the weight and burden of the trials and difficulties that are spread in your path; nor are you able to do anything that satisfies yourself, or that you think can satisfy God. By these painful and profitable lessons you are experimentally taught that you want the life of Christ as well as the death of Christ, the resurrection of Christ, as much as the crucifixion of Christ; Christ as an ever living, ever gracious, ever glorious Mediator, to send down supplies of his love and power into your soul, as much as you needed him to die upon the cross for your redemption. We therefore read, “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25), that is, that there might be an application in his risen life

of his righteousness that we might be not only pardoned, but experimentally justified in the court of a believing heart and a purged conscience.

iii. Here then is the life of faith that a believer lives upon the Son of God at the right hand of the Father. He comes to the cross to receive pardon of his sins through the sacrifice and death of Jesus; there to find peace with God by believing in his Son; there to have reconciliation by seeing his sins cast behind God’s back, and receive mercy into his soul as flowing through the atoning blood of the God-Man. But he has to walk through a great and terrible wilderness, wherein are fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought (Deut. 8:15); where he is surrounded with temptations and snares, his own evil heart being his worst foe. How can he travel through this waste howling wilderness unless he has a Friend at the right hand of God to send him continual supplies of grace; who can hear his prayers, answer his petitions, listen to his sighs, and put his tears into his bottle; who can help him to see the snares, and give him grace to avoid them; who descends from his heavenly watch tower the rising of evil in his heart, and can put a timely and seasonable check upon it before it burst into word or action? Does he not need an all-wise and ever-living Friend who can save him from pride by giving him true humility; save him from hardness of heart by bestowing repentance; save him from carelessness by making his conscience tender; save him from all his fears by whispering into his soul, “Fear not, I have redeemed thee;” and save him from a thousand deaths in fear or feeling by supplies of a hidden life? So that the life of a Christian is to be continually looking to the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God, to revive his soul when drooping, to manifest his love to his heart when cold and unfeeling, to sprinkle his conscience with his blood when guilty and sinking, to lead him into truth, keep him from error and evil, preserve him through and amid every storm, guide every step that he takes in his onward journey, and eventually bring him safe to heaven.

Thus there is a reconciliation of enemies by the death of Christ,

and a saving of friends by the life of Christ; and we must know both. We are reconciled as enemies, not as friends; for friends need no reconciliation. Reconciliation in and from a state of enmity against God is the very first thing we have to learn by divine teaching. Here it is we come to see salvation through the blood of Christ; and this makes us cast away all our own righteousness as filthy rags, and have no hope nor help but in the cross of Jesus Christ. That is the first thing we have to learn; for until we have learnt our first lesson, we cannot learn our second. But we are very slow learners. Unbelief and infidelity, pride and self-righteousness, guilt and despondency, all conspire to prevent us effectually learning it thoroughly, and as it were finally. Again and again then have we to recommence our first lesson, that we are sinners saved by the pure mercy of God, through the bloodshedding of Christ—enemies reconciled and brought near by the death of the Son of God. You, who are burdened by your sins; you, who feel the enmity of your heart; who would be reconciled and brought near to God, who desire nothing so much as to feel the love of God shed abroad in your soul; who want to experience the pardon of your sins and have a manifestation that you have an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ; to you, even to you, is the word of this salvation sent. And come you must, and come you will, with all your sins and transgressions, however black they may be, and lay them down, so to speak, at the foot of the cross; you must and will look with believing eyes to the crucified Son of God, and look and look, till he speak a word of peace, pardon, and consolation to your soul, through his bleeding wounds and suffering death. And then, when you have been thus reconciled to God by the death of Christ, and his precious blood has been sprinkled upon your conscience, making you a friend of God, you will have to live a life of faith and prayer upon him as a risen Mediator, as a gracious and glorious Head of influence, and Intercessor at the right hand of the Father. To him you will have to come day by day with your sins and sorrows, your mournings and lamentations over your repeated and aggravated backslidings,

your numerous, yea innumerable infirmities and short comings; and thus make him your best, may I add, your confidential Friend; for he is “a friend that sticketh closer than any earthly brother.” In this way, by confessing your sins, and by faith in his name, you will receive communications of his grace, mercy, and love into your heart, so as to save you from the love and spirit of the world, from error, from the power and strength of your own lusts, and the base inclinations of your fallen nature. These will often work at a fearful rate; but this will only make you feel more your need of the power and presence of the Lord Jesus to save you from them all.

Now it is an experience of these inward exercises and of the power and presence of the Lord in and under them which makes real religion such a living thing in a man’s bosom. A man, taught of God, will not and must not say, “All my sins were freely forgiven and blotted out by Christ’s bloodshedding and death upon the cross. Then and there I was reconciled to God. I have now nothing more to do with sin, nor sin with me.” This is to pervert and abuse a blessed gospel truth. You have still a great deal to do with sin, and sin has still a great deal to do with you; for it dwelleth in you, and will work, and that sometimes at an awful rate. And you will find, if your heart be right with God, that you will have many trials and temptations, conflicts and sorrows to bear; many battles to fight, and, I may add, victories to gain. You are a poor, defenceless sheep, surrounded by wolves, and, as such, need all the care and defence of the good Shepherd. You are a ship in a stormy sea, where winds and waves are all contrary, and therefore need an all-wise and able pilot to take you safe into harbour. It is in this way that we learn that “we are saved by Christ’s life.”

iv. And do bear in mind the words “much more;” for how they show the fulness and certainty of this salvation: “If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” It is as if the apostle would say, “The greatest, the hardest, the most difficult part of the work is already done; and if the main task has been

accomplished in the reconciliation of enemies, how much easier, so to speak, must be the salvation of friends. Thus there is the fullest assurance that all who were reconciled shall be saved; for if a dying Christ reconciled them, a living Christ will save them. O to feel the power of this death and this life—this death to reconcile, this life to save! And how an experimental knowledge of this death and this life opens up heavenly communications between Christ and the soul; makes religion a living reality; causes the Bible to shine forth as a book filled with ever new and ever glorious truths. How too a living experience of this kind separates from the world, and from everything which intervenes between Christ and the soul. If your feet are in this blessed path there is no difficulty that you can meet with beyond the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ to overcome; no temptation can attack you, no trial await you, no enemy assault you which he cannot defeat. Nor is there a single thing on earth or in hell which can harm you if you are only looking to the Lord Jesus Christ, and deriving supplies of grace and strength out of him. This reconciliation and this salvation thousands have proved; and why not you? With this parting question, in the hope you may take it home to your own breast and find the answer manifested there, I shall leave the subject before us in the hands of the blessed Spirit to do with it what seemeth good in his sight; and if he attend it with the unction of his grace, all praise and glory be ascribed to a Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit now and evermore.

Amen.

166 Spiritual Fruit

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Thursday Evening,
September 2, 1858

“From me is thy fruit found.”

Hosea 14:8

Man unites in himself what at first sight seem to be directly

opposite things; he is the greatest of sinners and yet the greatest of Pharisees. Now, what two things can be so opposed to each other as sin and self-righteousness? Yet the very same man who is a sinner from top to toe, with the whole heart sick and the whole heart faint, who is spiritually nothing else but a leper throughout, how contradictory it appears that the same man has in his own heart a most stubborn self-righteousness. Now, against these two evils God, so to speak, directs his whole artillery—he spares neither one nor the other; but it is hard to say which is the greatest rebellion against God—the existence of sin in man and what he is as a fallen sinner, or his Pharisaism—the lifting up his head in the pride of self-righteousness. It is not easy to decide which is the more obnoxious—the drunkard who sins without shame or the Pharisee puffed up to see how pleasing he is to God. The one is abhorrent to our feelings, and, as far as decency and morality are concerned, we would sooner see the Pharisee; but when we come to matters of religion the Pharisee seems the worst—at least our Lord intimated as much when he said the publicans and harlots would enter the kingdom of God before them.

Now, in this Book the Lord seems sometimes to knock Ephraim to pieces and then to put him together again. Sometimes we find denunciations against his backslidings, and then when Ephraim is broken to pieces the Lord seeks to raise him up, as he says in the 13th chapter, “When Ephraim spake trembling he exalted himself in Israel.” When he was humble and broken down—broken so as to tremble at the majesty of God—he exalted himself—that is, God exalted him, for God exalts the humble; “but when he offended in Baal he died”—the life of God seemed to be extinct in his soul. Now, in this last chapter the Lord speaks very comfortably, and he says, “O Ephraim,” that is Israel, “return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.” Never think to stand upright by thine own self-righteousness—thou hast fallen by thy iniquity, and now thou must humble thyself before the Lord thy God. Turn to the Lord thy God and say unto him, “Take away all iniquity and

receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips”—that is, we will sing and praise thy holy name. “Asshur shall not save us,” that is the king of Assyria, “we will not ride upon horses,” that is the devices of men, “neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods”—our idols are self and self-righteousness—“for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.” Well, I need not go on with the chapter. Ephraim shall say, “What have I to do any more with idols?” Here is Ephraim brought away from his idols: “I have heard him and observed him; I am like a green fig tree;” and then the words of our text, “From me is thy fruit found,” as though he would show Ephraim this—“Ephraim, though thou art a sinner, let not that cast thee down, so that thou shalt think there never can be any fruit in thee: look upward and not to thyself for this fruit.”

In opening up these words I shall with God’s blessing show—

I.—What is the fruit called here “thy fruit.”

III.—How this fruit is from the Lord, “from me is thy fruit found.”

III.—How this fruit not only is from the Lord but is found also to be such, and made manifest, for we not only have it from the Lord, but it is found to be from the Lord—“From me is thy fruit found.”

Now, I sincerely believe that wherever God the Spirit has anything to do with a man’s soul—and oh! if God the Spirit has nothing to do with a man’s soul what an awful thing it is—in his quickening and regenerating operations upon it, his communications of life and grace to it, there will always be a desire to bring forth fruit unto God. No child of God can be an Antinomian, and never so little as when God first begins to work upon the heart. If he has been years in the work there may be a leaning in his wretched heart to this weakness, to this carelessness, but no beginner has any leaning toward or is ever upset by this Antinomian devil. On the contrary his longing is to work out his own righteousness. He is trying to keep the law, working hard to

please God by a life of obedience; he is seeking to be holy, and endeavouring to overcome the wicked passions of his heart. So that you never find a child of God under the first teaching who has any leaning towards Antinomianism; it is his will to please God by his own acts and words. But I believe there is a desire in every soul under divine teaching to bring forth fruit, to come out of the world and the things that are of the world, to walk in God’s fear, and to have some testimonies that he is accepted, that he is a saved soul, and that he has an interest in the atoning blood of the Son of God. And all through a Christian’s life wherever the Spirit moves, wherever the Spirit operates upon that man’s heart and conscience, there will be a desire to bring forth fruit; and this is a mark and test of being one of God’s family. A profession does not put us into Christ, knowledge does not put us into Christ, talking and chattering do not put us into Christ, none of the works of man give us a birth and being in Christ, and a title to receive out of the fulness of Christ; therefore, from first to last, beginning, middle, and end it is all of sovereign grace, of the work and workmanship of the Holy Ghost in the heart and conscience. If a soul is living under the operation of the Holy Ghost, under this communication and influence, there is a breaking out and a breathing after bringing forth fruit. How that godly man Habakkuk stood upon the watch tower and his soul was grieved within him because there were those that stirred up strife and grievances. How he grieved and groaned not only because the Lord did not hear his prayer, but because he did not bring forth fruit. When we see that leanness, that being content to drag on a life without any union and communion, real faith, hope, or love, we may be sure that the love of God is not there. The people of God may sink very low, but there are those breathings after God that make them live to his praise and honour. Now, when they begin to long to bring forth fruit they begin to see what fruit is, for none can see what fruit is but the saints of God. All men do not know what fruit is, and until a man knows what it is he cannot bring it forth. For instance, here is a man who does not go to the

races, to balls or parties, but goes to church and pays his debts. O what a good man he thinks he is; he says his prayers at night, and makes sure of going to heaven. The man is blind as a gnat, dead as a door nail, and his heart is hard as adamant; he does not know what real Christianity is. He gives beef to the poor at Christmas, subscribes to charities and missions, and thinks what wonderful things he is doing. The man has not his eyes open to see what true Christianity is and what real Christian fruit is. When a child of God begins to see what fruit is and that it must be spiritual, the first thing he sees is that natural fruit is not accepted of God. If I gave an order for a basket of fruit because I was expecting a friend to dine with me, and the fruiterer sent me a basket of sloes, crabs, or rotten oranges I should think he was insulting me; and so if a man has not sufficient knowledge to distinguish between the crabs and all the rottenness of human production and good fruit, he will find that the Lord is not a God to be mocked, but that the only fruit which is acceptable in his sight must be spiritually produced by union and communion with Jesus Christ. And I wish that you who profess religion, and who may have it to some extent, would pray for a clearer view of what fruit is, for then, instead of being puffed up with pride you would see that there was little else in you but thorns and briars. Now, this is what the soul must know—that all fruit is produced by union and communion with Christ. You will find that subject opened up in the seventh chapter of Romans, where we read of being married to him who is raised from the dead. So if a man is not married to Christ and does not thus bring forth fruit it is only bastard fruit. All fruit that is not produced by marriage to Christ is not legitimate fruit. As in nature where children are born out of wedlock, they are the offspring of adultery, and as such will bear the stamp of their parents, and cannot take part in the inheritance of the father; so a person may bring forth fruit, but if that fruit is not legitimate God will stamp it with bastardy, and will not allow it to take part in the inheritance of his family. And, therefore, fruit is not of works. The

gift of a few shillings or a few times going to chapel or church will not produce it; it is deeper than this. What is this fruit then? It is faith, hope, love, godly fear, submission to God's will, tenderness of conscience, love and esteem for the brethren, self-denial, putting off the old man, putting on the new, and I might stand here till midnight and then not exhaust the catalogue. These are set forth by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians, where he says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Here are all the fruits of the Spirit penned down by the Holy Ghost himself; but you may examine it for yourselves, and indeed compare what is in your soul with it; then you will confess how short you come of bearing that fruit, the bearing of which stamps the Christian indeed, but we shall never bear fruit to God until we are brought to see that our fruit comes from God.

II.—This leads me to my second part—"From me is thy fruit found." How positively and clearly is this set forth in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of John's Gospel, where the Lord says, "Without me ye can do nothing." "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." So you see that union with Christ is indispensable to the bringing forth of fruit; for as the sap flows out of the stem so it is with the believing soul and Jesus; only so far as Christ flows into his soul is he able to bring forth fruit unto God. "Abide in me and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." Then there is a being in Christ by vital union, and an abiding in him by faith, prayer, hope, and love, and a receiving grace for grace out of his fulness; so that from him is our fruit. Now, as we begin to feel day by day our barrenness, and as our wrinkles arise in our face, we begin to see that from Jesus only is our fruit. Let us then raise our souls up out of our miserable selves and fix our eyes upon him at the right hand of God and beg of him to communicate of his grace to our souls, and send down the influence of his Spirit that

will bring forth fruit in us, which is peace, praise, and honour to God. No one can bring forth fruit without a conflict with self; self checks the crop like the ivy clinging to and strangling the vine. I have a vine in the front of my house, and almost the first thing I noticed when I returned home yesterday was that every leaf was struck with mildew—in fact the whole tree has been struck, as it were, with the same withering disease. What an emblem of a poor, withered professor! There will never be a cluster either fit to be made into wine or eaten as dessert. Now, when we see what we are in ourselves we see nothing but mildew. As the vine seems to have more enemies than any other fruit, because, as it is said, it cheereth the heart of God and man, and we are represented in Scripture as branches of the vine, therefore we need the grace of God in order that we may overcome these enemies. Though I have not sufficient skill to cure the mildew on my vine, yet the Lord has skill to cure the mildew in our souls, for his grace can and does and will sanctify the sinner's heart; therefore whatever despair I might feel about having any fruit from the vine on my trellis, there shall be no mildew upon the trellis of your soul, for he can send a shower to wash off the mildew, and put forth his hand to knock off the insects that feed upon the leaves, or, worse than all, upon the fruit of the vine. The Lord says, "From me is thy fruit found." The fruit flows forth, the spirit of thankfulness, of brokenness, and godly sorrow for sin. And yet there will be times and seasons when we sink very low, and when we feel or fear that there never was a spark of grace in our heart. But your very feeling there is no fruit is in itself a fruit. Your mourning over your unfruitfulness and your being cast down into dejection, these very things are fruit if they are spiritual, for they are produced by the same Holy Ghost that brings forth the blossoms of faith, hope, and love.

III.—There is the finding of this fruit. In a vine some of the richest clusters are found under the leaves. Leaf and fruit go very much together, for where there is a leaf full of sand and mildew you find nothing but a cluster of rotten fruit. Well, so in grace; if

there be little fruit there will be a withered profession, because the leaf represents the profession. The world can see what you profess, and they will see the mildew spots upon it. "O," they say, "that man talks about religion, but he is just like us. You who have to deal with him know how he deals, how he can laugh and giggle like other men, and how passionate he is if anything crosses him. It is only a profession; he goes to chapel, but we all know what he is." Here is a profession with the mildew upon it. "See," they may say, "that man was drunk last night: here is a man who goes to North Street Chapel." If the leaf is so bad, what must the berry be? If the man's profession is such, what must be the man himself? So if the mildew has struck the leaf you may be sure the mildew has reached the clusters. We find that the best clusters sometimes grow on the last bough; so it is in grace—the humbler a man is the more fruit he will bring forth. The same sap that feeds the branch nearest the stem feeds the branch farthest off. "From me is thy fruit found." Your soul may be often cast down, and you may say, "Was there ever any sinner like me?" but your complaints do not take you into the world again; you are not telling lies or joking and gossiping with your neighbours, but you are mourning and groaning that you are not bringing forth fruit unto God. Now, the Lord may speak these words to encourage his saints: "Come out of the world. From me is thy fruit found. Not from the world. Be not carried away with the things of time and sense—not from worldly-mindedness, not from family distress is fruit produced—but from me, out of my fulness by the communications of my grace." If you don't get it from that source you will get it nowhere, and every branch that beareth not fruit he heweth down. So that we come to one of two things: you must either be a branch that bears fruit from Christ—from the communications of Christ's love to your soul—or else one that beareth not fruit, which the Father taketh away. There is no intermediate state whereby we have part from ourselves and part from Christ, for "from me," saith the Lord, "is thy fruit found."

167 The Righteous and Their Blessings

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning,
Oct. 3, 1858

“But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.”

Psalm 37:39, 40.

Viewed by the natural eye, human society is made up of a vast number and an almost infinite variety of ranks and conditions. From the Sovereign on the throne to the pauper in the Union, society in this sense may be compared to a vast chain uniting two distant points, every link of which is necessary to the continuity of the whole. Some of the links may be large and others small—some strong and others weak—some of gold and others of iron—some highly polished and others worn and rusty; but each occupies a fixed position in the chain; and if one of the weakest and worst break or give way, the fracture destroys the connexion of the whole as much as if the strongest were to fail. Or to vary the figure, human society may be compared to an arch, in which every stone occupies a certain place, and is kept in its position by the key-stone, which drops into the centre and binds the whole fabric firmly together. The smaller links in the chain, if they could find a tongue, might sometimes complain how weak they are; but they determine the strength of the chain, for however closely wrought or massive it be, it cannot be stronger than its weakest link. Or the lower stones of the arch might murmur their indignation against the great weight that has been laid upon them; but if they sustain the greater pressure, they support more strongly and firmly thereby the whole arch, and thus occupy the most important and honourable position of the whole structure. In society, there always will, there always must be rich and poor; and the rich can

no more do without the poor than the poor can do without the rich. Without the poor, where would be labour? And without labour, where would be food or shelter, raiment or fuel, house or home, or the commonest necessities of life? We should all die of cold and starvation were there no poor to labour for us in the field and in the mine, at the forge, the bench, and the loom. And without the rich, how could the poor get wages to pay them for their labour and to provide themselves with food? So that capital and labour—the employer and the employed—the food consumer and the food producer; in other words, the rich and the poor, are indispensable to each other's well being. I drop these hints to show how foolish it is, as well as how sinful, for the poor to dislike the rich, and for the rich to despise the poor, when neither can exist without the other.

But when we view the present scene with a spiritual eye, and leave out of consideration that wondrous frame of human society which God has constituted with as much wisdom as the glorious sun over our head, or the fair creation with all its marvels under our feet, we see that men really are to be divided into only two classes: the righteous and the wicked—those who fear God and those who fear him not—those who are walking in the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life, and those who are travelling down the broad road that leads to eternal destruction. If you are an attentive reader of God's word, it cannot have escaped your observation how much the Scripture speaks of “the righteous.” In fact, we can scarcely open our Bibles without seeing them named in almost every page—their character described, their blessedness declared, and the most gracious promises pronounced on their behalf. It is of these “righteous” that our text speaks; and salvation, strength, help, and deliverance are declared to be their peculiar privilege and portion. In opening up these words, I shall, therefore, with God's blessing, endeavour:

I.—First, to show who “the righteous” are, and how their salvation is of the Lord.

II.—Secondly, that these righteous ones will and must have

their “time of trouble;” but that in that time of trouble, the Lord will prove their strength, will help them, deliver them, and save them.

III.—Thirdly, why the Lord will do all these things unto them: “because they trust in him.”

I.—It is evident, from God’s own testimony, that since the fall of man, none by nature are righteous in such a sense as the Scripture declares the saints of God to be. For let us bear in mind that in order to judge rightly of spiritual things, we must measure them not by a natural, but by a spiritual standard; and where shall we find that but in the inspired Scriptures? Suppose, for instance, that two surveyors are fixed upon to measure and value a certain building; and the tape or measuring rod of the one is marked right, and the other, through fraud or inadvertence, is marked wrong: how can they agree in the sum total of the measurement? Now if a dispute arise in consequence as to which is the correct measurement, what is to be done but to examine the two measures and abide by that which is the right one? Or if in the sale of an article the buyer weighs with one set of scales and weights and the seller with another, the one being true and the other false, how are these two men to come to any agreement with regard to the real weight of the article; and how is it to be decided according to truth and justice, except by putting it into fair scales against honest weights? So if men measure the righteous by any other than God’s measure; or if they weigh them by any other scales or weights than those of the sanctuary, how can God and men agree in their judgment who the righteous are any more than those of whom I have been speaking in figure? It is for this reason—that his scales and weights are all wrong, that the judgment of man who “the righteous” are differs so widely from the judgment of God. But need I ask you whose judgment is right and whose is wrong—whose word shall stand, God’s or theirs? (Jer. 44:28.) Immediately, therefore, that a man, through ignorance or prejudice, sets aside the judgment of God and follows his own, he commits a mistake, and if not

rectified by the grace of God, as far as he himself is concerned, a fatal one. The standard whereby man weighs himself or others is and must be necessarily defective, for he can merely view certain acts which he considers acts of righteousness. Man cannot read human hearts; he cannot enter into the springs of action, nor pierce into those hidden motives which give the real complexion to acts and determine their true character as good or evil; still less has he any view of the purity and holiness of him who is a consuming fire, nor is he acquainted with the breadth, spirituality, and strictness of God’s righteous law, which declares an angry word to be murder, and an unchaste glance to be adultery. He therefore weighs men’s acts in a corrupt balance, and measures lips and lives by a faulty standard; so that when he says—“These men are righteous: for they speak righteous words, they do righteous acts”—he, having no right means of determining, can pronounce no right judgment either upon men or their acts. To set aside the Bible or mistake its meaning is like a judge coming on circuit and deciding cases, not according to the law of the land, or the verdict of the jury, but according to his own prejudices or his own interest. But God, the supreme, the righteous, the unerring judge of all the earth, looking down from heaven upon the hearts and actions of men, has already pronounced the sentence with his own infallible lips. And this is his decision:—“There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Rom. 3:10, 11, 12.) If, then, we accept (and how, if taught by his Spirit, can we do otherwise?) God’s judgment and not man’s; if we are determined, as obedient children, to abide by the declaration of him who cannot lie, and to disregard the vain imaginations and lying deceits of a heart too deeply sunk in darkness to see, too deeply buried in sin to feel its own ignorance and its own alienation from God, we shall believe that to be true of all which we know, from experience, to be true of ourselves, that “there is none righteous, no, not one.”

And yet the word of truth—and our text is but one voice among hundreds—speaks of “the righteous” over and over again. But how can this be, if there are “none righteous;” and have we not, by rashly running down human nature, entangled ourselves here in a noose from which we cannot escape? This, then, is the enigma which we have to solve—this the knot which we have to untie; and I shall, with God’s blessing, endeavour to solve this enigma and to untie this knot—not by logical skill, or by sophistical argument, as if I wished to establish my own views, right or wrong, but by the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the word of truth and in the hearts of all who fear and love his great Name.

i. As God has declared that there are “righteous” people on earth, we may start from that point as a settled question. But as he has also declared that there is “none righteous,” we must come to this conclusion, that either the word of God contradicts itself, saying and unsaying in the same breath—(awful conclusion to come to!)—or that there are those who in one sense are righteous and in another not. In fact that is just the solution of the whole enigma—that the righteous are unrighteous in themselves, but righteous in Christ. But this simple statement will not suffice. A fuller explanation is needed. When, where, and how do they become righteous?

1. To understand this more clearly, we must run our thoughts back into a past eternity; for we must not view God as resembling ourselves, the being of a day, ever changing and ever changeable, resolving and breaking resolves, having no fixed purposes or eternal will, but viewing men and things with the eyes of time and waiting for events to happen. We must view him as he has declared himself to be, unchanging and unchangeable. “I am the Lord; I change not” (Mal. 3:6); “with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17.) In God’s own eternal mind, therefore, and unchangeable purpose, the righteous were always righteous, and this not by any foreseen goodness of their own, but in consequence of their union with, and standing in,

the Lord Jesus Christ as their covenant Head. Thus, as viewed in eternal union with the Son of God, they are righteous as partaking of his righteousness; for as is the head so are the members—the church of Christ never having any standing distinct from her Lord and Head. You cannot separate the vine from the branches, or the husband from the wife. You cannot dislodge the corner-stone from the building reared upon and united unto it. The vine would cease to be the vine without branches; the husband would be no husband without the wife; and the foundation would be incomplete without the superstructure. In this sense, then, from all eternity the people of God were righteous in Christ, because they were viewed in the mind of him who cannot change as for ever and unalterably one with the Lord the Lamb. In this sense they are righteous in his righteousness, holy in his holiness, and comely in his comeliness; so that he could say of and to his beloved Bride in their eternal betrothal—“Thou art all fair, my love there is no spot in thee.” (Song 4:7.)

2. We now come down to the creation of man, which was the first bringing of these hidden purposes to light; when God made our first parent in his own image, after his own likeness. But the fall broke in. Our first parent did not continue to stand in that uprightness in which he was created. An awful catastrophe took place—one evidently by God’s permission, but not by God’s cooperation. God had no hand in it, though not unforeseen or unprovided against; but in his infinite wisdom and for the manifestation of his own grace and glory, he left Adam to stand or fall in the strength that he naturally possessed when he came fresh from his divine Creator’s hand. We, my friends, and all the race of mankind were in Adam’s loins when that fearful fall took place. Just as Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Melchisedec met him, and paid tithes in him (Heb. 7:9), so were we in the loins of Adam when Satan met him and overthrew him; and we therefore fell with him. Adam was our natural covenant head, and thus his acts were our acts; for the head and members stand together in that intimate union and

relationship that what benefits the head benefits the members and what injures the head injures the members. This Adam well knew, for he was told before the fall to “increase and multiply;” and therefore he was warned that an innumerable offspring was in his loins, that he stood as their covenant head, and that if he fell, he was consigning not only himself, but unborn millions to death and ruin. The woman was deceived, but Adam was not (1 Tim. 2:14); and this made his sin so heinous, that he sinned wilfully and deliberately, and well knowing the awful consequences. From him we have all sprung by lineal descent. We are therefore not only involved in his sin, but tainted by his corruption. Thus we are doubly sinners—sinners by partaking of his sin in the actual commission of it in Paradise, and sinners by the transmission of his corrupt nature in which he begat all his children, and which we inherit from him. Thus all are by nature children of wrath, for “in Adam all die” (1 Cor. 15:22); and “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that (“in whom” margin) all have sinned.” (Rom. 5:12.) In this sense, “there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23.) Measured, then, by the law of God, no man is or can be righteous; for the description that the prophet gives of Zion in his day is true of us—“The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores.” Many think we take a pleasure in magnifying and exaggerating the fall of man—that we gloat over his corruptions, and instead of decently covering, rudely and rashly lay bare his sores. But where can we find language stronger than Paul’s description of the sins of the Gentile world in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and of the abominations of the Jewish world in the second? And what conclusion does he draw from both but this, that “every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may become guilty before God?” (Rom. 3:19.)

Now the Lord the Spirit makes all the family of God feel this

by bringing home the law in its breadth, spirituality, and curse into their conscience, that they may experimentally learn their guilt, and their mouth be effectually stopped from uttering a word in self-justification. Who that has the fear of God can appeal against the verdict of his own conscience? For the law not only condemns actions, but words and thoughts. It requires an unswerving obedience, makes no allowance for human infirmity, but takes, as it were, the sinner by the throat and says—“Pay me that thou owest. And the debt thou owest me, and every farthing of which thou shalt pay, is perfect, unswerving love to God, for he commandeth thee to love him with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; and thorough, unwavering love to man, for ‘thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’ And if thou do not love God and man; with this perfect love—if thou fail at any time or in any way in the feeling or in the action—if thou have but one murderous thought or unchaste desire; and if in a moment of weakness or temptation, thou break it and thus offend in one point, thou art guilty of all. (James 2:10.) There is then no mercy in the law for thee; to hell thou must go with all thy sins upon thine head.” Now who can stand before this fiery law? The children of Israel, when the law was proclaimed from Mount Sinai, begged that they might hear those terrible words no more—words which, with all their fearful accompaniments of blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet piercing ear and heart with its shrill notes, as blown by angels’ breath, struck awe and terror into the stoutest consciences. Now when this same law enters the conscience of a sinner with divine power, it lays him in the dust guilty before God; it cuts him up root and branch; for it not only condemns outward sin, but as a two-edged sword is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12); and thus turning all his comeliness into corruption, shows him and makes him to feel that there is nothing in him but sin and corruption from head to foot. It thus strips him of all creature righteousness, so that he falls before God with his mouth in the dust, crying out—“Behold, I am vile.”

But how can this be a righteous man? He cannot of himself, as he would freely tell you; but he can be made one, and that in a moment, not only before God, but in his own faith and feeling. When, then, he is in this state—with only a step, it may be, between him and death—without hope, without help, without strength, without wisdom, without righteousness in himself,—if there be but given a blessed revelation to his soul of the Person, blood, and righteousness of God’s co-equal, co-eternal Son, and he be enabled to stretch forth his hand to put on this robe of righteousness, and freely accept what God freely gives—pardon, peace, and salvation through the Son of his love—then he is justified in his own conscience; then he stands not only a righteous man before God, but by receiving the atonement (Rom. 5:11), and being clothed with the garments of salvation, and covered with the robe of righteousness (Isa. 61:10), he becomes a righteous man in his own feelings, in the enjoyment and experience of his free and full justification from the curse of the law and the wrath of God due to his transgressions.

3. But there is also another sense in which the children of God are righteous; and that is, by the implantation in their bosom of a righteous nature, which, as being born of God, is as pure as God is pure and as holy as he is holy. For this reason we are said to be “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4), and to “put on the new man which after God [i.e., after the image of God] is created”—it being a divine and new creation, “in righteousness and true holiness.” (Eph. 4:24.) This pure and holy nature, John tells us, cannot sin, because it is born of God (1 John 3:9), and is “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which makes the soul free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2), being that kingdom of God in the heart which is “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” (Rom. 14:17.) This is an imparted righteousness, and its very essence is that sweet spirituality of mind which is life and peace, and that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. (Rom. 8:6; Heb. 12:14.)

4. But there is still another sense in which the saints of God are righteous; which is by producing fruits of righteousness, those good works unto which they are created, and which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them. (Eph. 2:10.) Let no man think that this is a small or unimportant matter, and that it is of little consequence how a man lives so long as he believes. It is not those who say Lord, Lord, that enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of God. (Matt. 7:21.) The end of every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is to be “hewn down and to be cast into the fire.” (Matt. 3:10.) But the saints of the Most High are not “trees whose fruit withereth, twice dead, plucked up by the roots” (Jude 12), “but trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified.” But do not other men perform righteous actions? No; because they are not done from righteous principles nor to righteous ends. Do not motives much decide the true nature of actions? Take this case. Two persons visit the same individual—say some poor sick widow—to condole with her and relieve her temporal wants. The heart of the one is touched with compassion and sympathy, and, weeping for and with her, he seeks by every means to soothe her sorrows, and before he leaves ministers of his substance to her necessities. The other, out of mere ostentation or as an act of duty, pays his visit more as a relieving officer or a parish overseer than a sympathising friend, and, after a few dry, cold, hard words about the duty of submission, puts into her hand, being well able to afford it, double the amount that the other gave her. Now would you say that these two men did an equally good action, or that he who gave double did twice as good a work as the other? Though outwardly they do the same act, you decide upon the relative goodness of it by scrutinising the motive; and if you can thus exercise your judgment upon what is and what is not a morally good action, how much more shall the all-seeing Majesty of Heaven judge what is or is not a spiritually good action! The good works, then, of natural men are not righteous actions, because they are not of the Spirit, nor done with an eye to the glory

of God, nor renounced by the doer as meritorious. Did not the widow's mite outweigh in value all the other gifts cast into the treasury? Righteous actions can only be performed by righteous men. The tree must be made good before the fruit can be good. The good acts then of the saint of God, done under the influence of the Holy Spirit, are righteous acts, because they spring from a righteous principle and are done to a righteous end—the honour and glory of a righteous God.

We seem, then, brought to this conclusion, that those who know, fear, and love God, are righteous in four different ways. They are righteous as being eternally justified in the Lord the Lamb; they are righteous as being clothed with the imputed righteousness of the Son of God; they are righteous as possessing an imparted righteousness, the new man of grace; and they are righteous in their life and conversation, by performing acts of righteousness.

ii. But I pass on to show how the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord. Though they are righteous in the sense I have pointed out, they cannot save themselves, wholly or in part. They have, in fact, no hand in their own salvation. The whole is of grace from first to last. They may hinder, but they cannot help; nor can they produce anything out of their hearts or in their lives available for their own salvation or that of others. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious"—so precious that nothing but the blood of Christ can effect it, and, as regards all human exertions, without this, "it ceaseth for ever." (Psalm 49:7, 8.) Look at the several ways in which I have shown that the saints of God are righteous, and see what you can find of self in any. Did they plead their cause with God before the world had birth or being, and ask him to give them a name and a place in the Book of Life, when time itself had no existence? Where were they when the foundations of the earth were laid, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:7.)

We can no more think that the members of the mystical body of Christ united themselves to him, their head, than we can think the members of our natural body put themselves in their present place by an act of their own will. They could not, therefore, be righteous in that sense. Nor could they be righteous by working out a perfect obedience to God's holy law, for they had lost all power, through the fall, to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Nor could they produce any internal fruits of righteousness such as a heart-searching God can accept, for since the fall every imagination of man's heart is only evil continually. It is like a gutter running down the street. You may try if the water be drinkable, but glass after glass will have to be thrown away. Thus it is with the heart of man. Thought after thought, desire after desire, and imagination after imagination, are all equally corrupt; nor can the water thus polluted at the fountain head run itself sweet, but will ever cast forth its wickedness from its natural inherent sinfulness. Nor again can they without grace perform acts of righteousness. As, therefore, without righteousness there is no salvation, and they have no righteousness of their own, their righteousness must be from God. And is not this his own declaration—"Their righteousness is of me," saith the Lord? (Isa. 54:17.)

But how is the salvation of the righteous of the Lord? 1. First, in its eternal contrivance. O what a contrivance was the way of salvation! How it would have tasked the utmost skill and wisdom of angelic minds, had the Lord set the brightest seraphim to devise how sinful man might be saved and yet God's honour and justice be preserved intact. All the celestial hierarchy might have consulted among themselves to all eternity, but none could have solved the problem. Had they been so far moved by compassion as to feel a desire, "Lord, pity poor man! Think of that terrible hell to which he is hastening!" would not a sense of his eternal justice and infinite holiness have arrested the thought before it passed out of their lips? How could the highest angelic intellect imagine a way whereby mercy might be shown and yet justice not suffer? They

had seen their fellow-angels hurled from heaven's battlements into the burning lake. Why should not sinning man suffer the same punishment as sinning angels? That the mysteries of redeeming love surpass in themselves the comprehension of angels is plain from the words of the apostle—"Which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:12); and yet they are ever learning in it new lessons of the wisdom of God, as the apostle tells us—"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. 3:10.) Shall I say too much if I express the thought that to harmonise justice and mercy drew on the utmost resources of the divine mind? At least Scripture bears me out in declaring that the Person and work of the God-Man is the most eminent display of divine wisdom that could be manifested, as the apostle cries out in an ecstasy of admiration, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." (Rom. 11:33.) That God's co-equal and co-eternal Son should take into union with his own divine Person a pure humanity, conceived under the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and in that pure humanity should suffer, bleed, and die; by that one offering of his sacred body and soul should put away sin, and by his active and passive obedience work out and bring in a righteousness in which millions of ruined sinners might stand accepted in the beloved; and yet that every attribute of God should thereby be fully harmonised and eternally glorified,—surely this contrivance is worthy of the infinite wisdom of God. In this sense, then, may we say that the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.

2. But having looked at the contrivance, let us view it in its accomplishment. How the eye of faith follows not only the plan but the execution? How it sees the Son of God taking flesh into union with his divine Person in the womb of the Virgin Mary; how it views him a babe in Bethlehem's manger; then a child growing up in wisdom and stature. How it follows him all through the course of his holy, innocent life, until it comes to the garden

of Gethsemane, where it views him sweating great drops of blood and groaning under the wrath of God. How thence the believing eye accompanies the blessed Redeemer to the cross of Calvary, and there sees the suffering Son of God bathed in blood—the sun hiding his light, the earth quaking to its very centre, tombs opening and giving up their dead, until his expiring voice sounds forth the words "It is finished," and the Holy Lamb of God bows his head and gives up the ghost. O, truly, truly, when we gaze upon the sight, and see the suffering son of God—when we view by the eye of faith those precious drops of blood which fell from the Redeemer's thorn-crowned brow and pierced hands and feet and side, well may we say, "Here is pardon; here is righteousness; here is salvation." Where, O where, can we find any other. Is not this salvation in its full accomplishment? Is not this a finished work?

3. But is there not something still beyond this? Yes, there is. There is salvation in its application, in its realisation and enjoyment. The salvation, which is of God the Father's eternal contrivance, and God the Son's full accomplishment, needs God the Holy Ghost's divine application; for salvation is to be enjoyed in the heart by being personally applied to the conscience. How ever a trembling sinner may feel his shame and nakedness, he cannot stretch forth his hand and take the robe as his own; he cannot by an act of faith bring before his eyes the atoning blood, or sprinkle it upon his conscience. As it was Moses who sprinkled the blood upon the people—not the people upon themselves; as it was the father who brought forth the best robe—not the returning prodigal breaking into his father's wardrobe: so it is the Holy Ghost who sprinkles the blood of Jesus upon the conscience, and clothes the soul with his salvation. Thus the church exults—"He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." (Isaiah 61:10.) In this way salvation is known to be of the Lord by divine manifestation and in personal experience.

And O, what a salvation must that be which is wholly his! What beauty and glory do we see stamped upon the works of God's hand in creation! I have sometimes thought that God has scattered beauty upon the face of creation, if I may so speak, from his very finger tips! The butterflies that flit to and fro in the summer's sun, the birds that skim through the air, the shells which strew the floors of ocean, and the flowers which adorn garden and field,—how beauty is stamped upon them all; as if even the outer court of creation, the very precincts of the king's palace, must be beautiful; as issuing from the mind, and called into being by the voice of the King in his beauty. For if heaven is his throne, earth is his footstool, and beautiful because his foot rests upon it. But in salvation, how the beauty, grace, and glory of God pre-eminently shine forth! How all things in creation fall short of the beauty of a suffering Mediator—of the grace of the bleeding Lamb—of the glory of salvation as revealing mercy without trespassing on the demands of justice. Where else can we find a salvation which at once glorifies God and saves man; which harmonises all the perfections of Jehovah, and crowns Jesus Lord of all? Truly, then, we may say, “the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.” Nor do I believe that you are a righteous person unless you can say “Amen! amen! salvation is of the Lord! I believe it, I know it, I feel it.” But you may have learnt it where Jonah went to learn it, in the very “belly of hell,” for there Jonah felt that salvation is of the Lord. Or if more gently handled and taught in less severe a school, you have still seen and felt enough of misery and mercy, malady and remedy, law and gospel, to know that salvation is of the Lord. This salvation may not have reached your heart with all that sweet power and full assurance that you may desire; you may still have doubts and fears as to your interest therein; but from a pressing sense of need, and sips and tastes that the Lord is gracious, you receive with hearty approbation the blessed truth that salvation is of the Lord. You are very sure that salvation is not in yourself; and if not in yourself, where can you look for it except in the Lord?

Look up, therefore, doubting, trembling saint of God, and see the salvation of the Lord! Look up and see the blessed Jesus at the right hand of the Father, who has saved thy soul by his own precious blood, and given thee some pledge and earnest of it, and believe, as God may enable thee, that salvation is of the Lord, and that thou, even thou, hast an interest therein! This, of which thou hast already the foretaste in hope and the earnest in hand, will, when more clearly and fully manifested, gladden thy heart, remove every guilty fear, support thee in every trial, comfort thee on the bed of languishing and pain, bear thee through the dark valley, and land thy happy soul in a blissful eternity.

II.—But this leads me to show that the righteous have their times of trouble; for they have to prove in the path of tribulation what the Lord is to them. We are not carried to heaven in a coach and four. We are not borne upon men's shoulders in a palanquin and taken into the blissful presence of God in a sleep, without any concern or anxiety, trouble or sorrow. There is “a time of trouble” for all the saints of God; and it is in this time of trouble that they learn that salvation is of the Lord, and what the Lord their salvation is to their souls.

1. The first time of spiritual trouble which the Lord's people experience is when God pricks their conscience by a convincing word—when he applies the keen edge of his two-edged sword to their heart, and sends the sentence of the law into their conscience. This is the time of Jacob's trouble, of which we read that “none is like it.” (Jer. 30:7.) I do not mean that all the quickened family of God are pierced with equal depth and poignancy of conviction; but the wound must be deep and powerful enough to kill. A death and a resurrection must take place in the soul as well as in the body. This death may be a sudden stroke, or the effect of prolonged disease. In dying literally, there may be the sudden stroke of fever, or a lengthened paralysis; a severe and agonising but short illness, or a long, lingering consumption equally brings the body to the house appointed to all living. So all must die under the law and to

their own righteousness; but whether they die quickly or slowly—be the wound in the first instance very deep or less severe, it is a time of trouble to all the saints of God.

But the Lord, we read in our text, “will be their strength” in the time of trouble. When you were first called by grace, you would have sunk into despair, unless the Lord had been pleased secretly to support your soul. His support is an invisible support. Did not the Lord, when he was first pleased to awaken your soul, give you strength in that time of trouble? You knew not before what the strength of God was; but he strengthened you to cry and pray to him for mercy; to believe that in his own time he would appear; to wait for that time, and not outrun or fall behind it. But for his strength thus secretly put forth, where would your guilty soul have been now?

Besides which, according to our text, he helped you; he gave you some little assistance. He helped you by a soft sustaining word to hope in his mercy—to lie at his feet till deliverance came—to seek for it in the appointed way—to read the word with some spiritual understanding—to hear the truth with some softness and brokenness of feeling—to call upon his name with some earnestness and power—to unbosom your heart with some freedom of access. He helped you to look unto the Son of his love, as one from whom, and from whom alone all your salvation could come, and to refuse all comfort from any other hand. So that now, looking back upon this time of trouble, you can see—though you could not perceive it then—that the Lord was your secret strength and help, and worked in you in a manner you did not then understand, but which you can now more clearly and plainly distinguish.

2. But there is another time of trouble, when the Lord is pleased to open up more fully and thoroughly the fountains of the great deep, and to lay bare the secrets of the Adam-fall. We do not usually know this in the first teachings of God in our soul. We see the evil of sin, but are unacquainted for the most part with the evil

of the heart. We see the streams, but not the fountain; we taste the fruits, but know not the root that bears the stem which brings them forth. But after a time, when we have been favoured with some little deliverance, the Lord leads us into the chambers of imagery and shows us what we are in the Adam-fall. This is indeed the time of trouble. When you see and feel nothing in your heart but sin and wickedness; when you would be holy, but find that you cannot be so; when little else but filth, pride, uncleanness, and rebellion are at work in your carnal mind,—all this brings with it a time of trouble, for you are dismayed at the discovery of the deep and foul abyss which God has lain open within by the light of his Spirit.

3. It is also a time of trouble, when the Lord, who has revealed himself to your soul, begins to hide his face; when you doubt and fear that all is a delusion—that your faith is wrong from the beginning—that the work upon your soul was not really the Lord’s—that you have been deceiving yourself, the people of God, and the minister to whom you have told your experience. You fear that you have been deceived, that all is a delusion, and that you have added to the rest of your sins the daring crime of hypocrisy.

4. Another time of trouble is when temptation besets you sore—when Satan riddles you, as it were, to and fro in his sieve as he riddled Peter (Luke 22:31); and so much falls through the meshes that only a few grains of grace, which the Lord has lodged by his own Spirit in your heart, seem to remain. When you are put into the furnace to endure that fiery trial which shall try every man’s work of what sort it is; or are in deep mire where there is no standing; or are struggling against the waves and billows that seem bursting over your head, until you are afraid that you shall say or do some dreadful thing which will plainly prove you to be the enemy of God, and given up by him to destruction of body and soul,—this is indeed a time of trouble.

5. Or, as the afflictions of the righteous are many, and we can lay down no certain path of suffering, you may be called upon to pass through heavy trials in providence—bereavements of wife or

child, or painful and peculiar family troubles, which may wound and lacerate your warmest affections and tenderest feelings. All the family of God have their allotted number and measure of griefs and sorrows, which, as they come upon them, form “times of trouble” which, with all our other times, are in the hands of the Lord (Psalm 31:15), and are dealt out by him with unerring wisdom and most faithful love.

Now these times of trouble try the saint of God, and they are meant to do so: that is the very purpose why they are sent, for “the Lord trieth the righteous.” Still the promise holds good: “he is their strength in the time of trouble.” When he breaks up the fountains of the great deep of sin and iniquity, he strengthens his people that they may not be carried away by the flood. When he hides his face, he strengthens them to say—“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” When temptation besets them sore—when they are put into the furnace, the Lord is with them there, as he was with the three men whom Nebuchadnezzar cast in. The Son of God is there with them, so that not a hair of their head is singed, nor the smell of fire cast upon them. (Dan. 3:27.) In all their afflictions he is afflicted, and by sharing it with them supports them under it. He is thus their strength; for he strengthens them with strength in their soul. He enables them to bear the weighty cross—to sustain the heavy load of trial and affliction—to put their mouth in the dust as needing and deserving his chastising strokes, and submit to his righteous dispensations and dealings as plainly sent by a gracious and loving hand. And ever and anon he drops in a sustaining word, gives an encouraging look, bestows a soft and healing touch, and thus helps them to wait in faith and hope until in due time he sends full deliverance. Thus he helps and delivers, and will do so in every time of trouble down to their dying bed, when he will give them their full and final deliverance from the body of sin and death and a world full of iniquity and sorrow.

O what a blessed inheritance is the inheritance of the righteous! Not only is their salvation from first to last of the Lord,

but he continually helps and delivers them; yea, “he delivers them from the wicked,” from their ungodly persecutors, their malicious foes, and all who hate them, because they love and follow Jesus. O the blessedness of the righteous! You may be very poor in this life’s goods; you may have trouble upon trouble, trial upon trial, affliction upon affliction; but if you are one of these righteous ones whose heart God has touched by his Spirit and grace, and who he is training up as an heir of eternal glory, happy, thrice happy is your state and case! Your salvation is of the Lord. Can that be disappointed or disannulled? Not till the Lord ceases to be the Lord. As such he will still be your strength, will help you and deliver you, and eventually bring you into the bliss of his own presence, the fulness of his own joy, and the glory of his own inheritance.

III.—And now comes our last point—why the Lord does all this for the righteous: “because they trust in him.” That is not the primary but the secondary cause.

But why do they trust in him. Why? Because they can trust in no one else. The times of trouble have weaned them from all earthly confidence. They can no longer trust in their own goodness, wisdom, strength, or righteousness. Driven out of house and home, they cleave to the rock for the want of a shelter. Jesus must be their all in all, for none else have they to look to in heaven or in earth. Thus they trust in the Lord as their only help and hope. O what a blessed thing it is to have in one’s own bosom a secret trust in Jesus—that whilst so many are looking to something in themselves or in one another, resting their eternal salvation on works that really are but the sports of a child, the saint of God is reposing upon the Lord of life and glory. On him he hangs his hope and in him he puts his trust. These the Lord will honour; nor will he ever disappoint their hope or put their confidence to shame. Who ever trusted in the Lord and was confounded? If you are enabled to trust in him, to believe his faithful word, to discard all creature confidence, and to hang the weight of your soul—and O what a weight is that!—upon a faithful, covenant-keeping God, he

will never leave, fail, or forsake you. You may find it hard to trust in him at all times or indeed at any time. You may feel a want of something sensible—something to see or hear, distinct from faith. Look not for this. We walk by faith, not by sight. It must be a naked trust in an invisible God. “Some trust in horses, some in chariots, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.” (Psl. 20:7.) And if you are enabled so to trust, he will make it manifest sooner or later in your own conscience that you are one of the righteous; light will beam upon your path; glory will dawn upon your heart, and you will have the end of your faith, even the salvation of your soul. May we not well add—”Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord!”

168 The Pouring Out Of The Spirit Upon Zion’s Offspring

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord’s Day Morning,

Oct. 17th, 1858

“For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord’s: and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.”

Isaiah 44:3-5

The promises of the Gospel are absolute and unconditional. If it were not so, it would cease to be the Gospel, or be so only in name. But you may say, “What, then, are there no conditional promises in the Bible?” Yes; an abundance of them. You will find one chapter (Deuteronomy 28) in which they are scattered in the richest profusion. But you will remark this, that wherever there is a condition, there must also be a penalty; for if there be a reward for obedience, there must be punishment for disobedience. The

Law, therefore, which holds out the conditional promise, has attached to it also a curse, that being the penalty of disobedience to its righteous demands. Of this, the chapter to which I have already alluded gives the most pregnant proof; for we read in it, “If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field.” (Deut. 28:3) But we also read, “If thou wilt not hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field.” (Deut. 28:16) Every Jew that we meet bears, we may almost say, this chapter stamped upon his face, and cries aloud, “Would you know the effect of a conditional promise, look at me. I could not fulfill the condition; therefore I suffer the penalty.” But the Gospel has no curse; therefore the Gospel has no condition. The Gospel is a message of mercy from God to men. The literal meaning of the word is “good news,” “gland tidings.” To whom? To those who are so deeply sunk in the Adam-fall as to be unable to lift themselves up or out. But it would not be good news if it set man to do what he has no power to perform. Suppose a man were to fall into a deep well, and you took a rope and let it down within five yards of him as he was struggling in the water, and kept calling out to him, “Now, my good man, if you will only climb up those steep and slippery sides for five yards, you may get hold of the rope, and then I will pull you out.” Would that be the way to save the man, or to mock him? Or if a person who could not swim had fallen into a river and was drowning, while you kept standing on the bank and calling to him, “If you will only swim a few yards towards me, I will come in and rescue you:” would not that be adding insult to barbarity? Those are two conditional promises, and you see how suitable they are to a drowning, dying man. So if the Lord had attached to the promises of the Gospel a condition of this kind, that he would save us provided we first rendered to him a pure obedience, we being as unable to render him that pure obedience as the man would be to climb up those five slippery yards of the well; God, instead of saving us by the Gospel, would

only mock us, and the Gospel would be to us even worse than the Law, as insulting us with the offer of a salvation which it could not give and we could not take. The promises, therefore, of the Gospel are, and must be from its very nature, absolute and unconditional.

But though they are thus necessarily unconditional, they are also descriptive, or what I may perhaps call characteristic: that is, they describe characters, and are addressed to persons in whom there is a certain feeling, or what is termed experience, which, we have reason to believe, God the Spirit has wrought in them. I do not mean to say that all are such, but many of them are. For instance, in the words before us, the Lord gives a promise that he will “pour water.” But upon whom? “Upon him that is thirsty.” That he will pour “floods.” Upon whom? “Upon the dry ground.” There we have an absolute promise that the Lord will pour out water; but we have also the distinctive mark given that the water is to be poured out upon him that is thirsty. The Lord declares unconditionally that he will give “floods;” but, he adds, “upon the dry ground,” to show the character of the ground upon which those floods are poured.

Our text, I admit, is somewhat long, but at the same time is so continuous and connected, that if I were to shorten it I should but break it to pieces. I must, therefore, take it as it is; and, in endeavoring, with God’s blessing, to open it, I shall direct your minds to these three particulars:—

I. First, the promise itself, that God will “pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground;” that he will “pour his Spirit upon thy seed, and his blessing upon thine offspring.”

II. Secondly, the immediate effects of the Lord’s pouring water upon the thirsty and floods upon the dry ground: that “they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.”

III. Thirdly, its lasting and more permanent fruits: “One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.”

I. I have just alluded to the distinctive and characteristic nature of many of the promises attached to the Gospel, for all are not of that character, and have in a few words pointed out how this is one of those distinctive characteristic promises. I have, therefore, with God’s blessing, now to show the character that is stretched beneath the line of the promise, and upon whom he has declared he will pour water; and this is at once pointed out by the striking expression, “the thirsty.”

i. Thirst, as a feeling of the soul, in a spiritual sense, is certainly indicative of divine life. It is as impossible, spiritually viewed, for a man dead in sin to thirst after a living God, as for a corpse in the grave-yard to thirst after a draught of cold water from the well. I know for myself that such a feeling as thirsting after God had not place in my bosom, until the Lord was pleased to quicken my soul into spiritual life. I had heard of God by the hearing of the ear; I had seen him in creation, in the starry sky, in the roaring sea, in the teeming earth; I had read of him in the Bible; I had learnt his existence by education and tradition; and I had some apprehensions of his holiness in my natural conscience; but as to any spiritual thirsting after him, any earnest desire to fear him, know him, believe in him, or love him,—no such experience or feeling, I can say for myself, ever dwelt in my bosom. I loved the world too dearly to look to him who made it, and myself too warmly and affectionately to seek him who would bid me crucify and mortify it. A man, therefore, I am well convinced, must be made alive unto God by spiritual regeneration, before he can experience any such sensation as is here conveyed by the figure “thirst,” or know anything of the Psalmist’s feelings when he cried, “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.” (Ps. 42:1,2)

The word “thirst” conveys to our mind this idea—desire; but a desire of such a kind, that it must be gratified, or life must cease.

You may desire many things, but those desires may never be gratified, and yet you not be the worse for their non-gratification. For instance, you may desire a better house, better clothes, better furniture, a larger income: many desires may spring up in your mind after a variety of objects, the withholding of which will not effect life, or health, or happiness. But thirst, I speak now of bodily thirst, is a desire that must be gratified, or death must ensue, as it has ensued to many a shipwrecked sailor, and many a wanderer in the Arabian or African desert, where whole caravans have perished of thirst, and left their bleached bones to proclaim their death and the manner of it. Thus the Holy Ghost, in using the figure "thirst," not merely intends thereby to convey the idea of the newborn soul desiring God, but with such an intense desire that it must have God or die. "Give me Christ or else I die," has been the prayer and cry of many a spiritually stranded sailor on the rocky islet where there was no water; of many a spiritual wanderer "in the great and terrible wilderness, wherein are fiery serpents and scorpions and drought." Now wherever God has raised up in the soul this spiritual thirst after himself, he certainly will answer that desire, for "the desire of the righteous shall be granted." (Prov. 10:24) His own invitation is, "Ho! every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters;" (Isa. 55:1) and Jesus himself says with his own blessed lips, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink." (John 7:37) Nay, he opened his ministry by pronouncing a blessing on such, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." (Matt. 5:6)

ii. But the word "thirsty" in our text does not so much refer to a soul that is thirsty, as land that is thirsty, that being a frequent metaphor to describe a dry, parched soil, as the Psalmist speaks of "a dry and thirsty land where no water is;" (Ps. 63:1) and as Isaiah declares that "the thirsty land shall become springs of water." (Isa. 35:7) The spiritual meaning of both figures is much the same, but the words "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty" seem more

applicable to land dry and parched up than to the human body. Nothing can be more simple or expressive than this transference of thirst to the natural soil, for as the human body thirsts after water, so does the dry, parched ground thirst after rain. We know what that land is, and necessarily must be, which the rain rarely visits. There are countries in the globe which scarce ever experience the blessing of rain, or of any substitute by irrigation from rivers; and these are stricken with the curse of continual barrenness, because no showers fall from the skies, and no bounteous Nile, its substitute, spreads itself over their bosom. There are, therefore, doomed to perpetual sterility, as if they ever lie under the wrath of the Almighty. Such by nature is the soul of man. Like those desert tracks to which I have alluded, such as the great Arabian desert, or the vast African Sahara, on which no rain from heaven falls, the soul of man by nature is a barren wilderness; nor can it, except by rain from heaven falling upon it, spiritually produce herb, or fruit, or flower such as God can approve. The saint of God, when taught by the Holy Spirit, is often made to feel that his heart is this barren wilderness. Do what he can, do what he may, he cannot cause any one fruit of the Spirit to spring up in heart, lip, or life. He is therefore obliged from sheer necessity to look to the Giver of all good, and sometimes earnestly cry to him with groans and tears, that he would pour water upon the thirsty soil and make it fruitful and productive of every good word and work.

The Lord, then, has promised to "pour water upon him that is thirsty." Let us look a little more closely at the promise here given; and as we have examined the word "thirsty," let us now denote a few minutes' attention to the figure of "water,"—an emblem which the Blessed Spirit has so frequently employed in the word of truth, and we may say has in an especial manner consecrated to his own use by designating thereby his own operations. Water, then, is the standing figure throughout the Scripture to represent the operations and the influences of the Holy Spirit, and is most beautifully adapted for that purpose from its peculiar nature and

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properties. A few of these are worth considering.

1. First, water has a purifying effect. Our bodies, our clothes, our houses, the streets of our town are all purified by the crystal element. Water is indispensable to cleanliness of every kind. Not only every tree, plant, herb, and flower, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall, but even the air itself is washed and purified by the descending showers. The natural creation would, as it were, rot and fester under its own filth, were it not continually bathed by millions of purifying drops from the sky. So in grace. How is the heart of man, rotting and festering as it is by nature and practice in all manner of uncleanness, to be purified from the guilt and filth and love of sin, but by the washing of regeneration, by the pouring out upon it of the Holy Spirit, according to that gracious promise? "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." (Ezek. 36:25) We should ever bear in mind that not only must the soul be washed in the blood of Christ from outward guilt, but must be also sanctified by the washing of regeneration from inward filth; and these two go together, for from the wounded side of Jesus there flowed both blood and water—

"The first to atone,
To cleanse us the latter;
The fountain's but one."

2. And how fertilizing is water! What crop can be produced except by the aid of the rain that falls from heaven or of the river that irrigates the land? So in grace. No fertility is there in our heart by nature. We cannot even raise up a spiritual thought, or give birth to a gracious desire. Sterile are the lips to a feeling word, barren the hands to an acceptable action, except as God is pleased to make us partakers of his Spirit and grace, and to work in us both to will and do of his good pleasure. As then the rain fertilizes the otherwise barren soil, so does the Holy Ghost fertilize, so to speak, the dry and arid soil of the heart by communicating to it a principle of fruitfulness. Thus we read of the fruit of the Spirit, such

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as "love, joy, peace," etc., (Gal. 5:22) and that it is "in all goodness and righteousness and truth;" (Eph. 5:9) clearly showing that without his gracious operations there is neither goodness, truth, and righteousness. So we read, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together." (Isa. 45:8) It is the dropping of the heavens from above, and the pouring down of righteousness from the skies that bring forth salvation in the heart, and make righteousness spring up as a fruitful crop.

3. How softening, too, is water! When the earth is parched by long and continued drought, and the clods of genial rain emulate the very stones for hardness, how the genial rain that falls from the skies penetrates into their iron pores, and with gentle yet with irresistible force softens, crumbles, and breaks them down into a mellow tilth. An unobserved miracle! Every drop doing its work, and millions combining to produce an effect so marvelous! Sweet figure of the softening operations of the blessed Spirit, making the conscience tender, the heart broken, and the spirit contrite.

4. And how refreshing water is! To bathe in the cool stream when assailed by the dogstar's fervent heat, when nature herself faints and languishes under the rays of the burning sun, how refreshing! How the languid nerves of the wearied artizan become restrung, as the pores of the skin are cleansed from the sweat and dust that have begrimed it! So how refreshing to the soul are manifestations of God's goodness and love, as applied by the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit! "The washing of water by the word" not only washes the soul from the guilt and filth of sin, but refreshes and revives every languishing, fainting grace.

5. And water also, when drunk during severe thirst, when the mouth is parched and the throat husky and dry, how grateful, how delightful the draught! The testimony of all travelers who have explored the deserts of Australia concurs in speaking of the delight with which water is drunk when found. Even our limited

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experience in this land of cloud and rain, where a dripping sky is continually refilling our brooks and wells, is enough to teach us how sweet a cup of cold water may be—sweeter far than the toper's morning dram or the drunkard's nightly glass. How gratefully it removes all the painful feelings of thirst. The parched mouth, the dry throat, the racking headache, how they are all removed by a draught of water! So it is with the soul. How dry and parched the throat sometimes is in a spiritual sense, and how a draught from Bethlehem's well at once removes those painful feelings under which it has languished!

Water, therefore, we readily perceive, is a most beautiful and expressive figure of the influences and operations of the Holy Ghost upon the soul. And this leads me to think that when the Lord said to Nicodemus, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," (John 3:5) he did not mean that a man must be born of baptismal water, but of that which water, as a figure, represents. No greater or more delusive figment has been introduced into the Church than what is usually called "baptismal regeneration," the main pillar of which is alleged to be the text which I have just quoted. Let me, then, drip a few words upon the subject. When the Lord speaks of being born of water and of the Spirit, he does not mean thereby baptismal water, or the literal element of water at all, but the influences of the blessed Spirit as distinguished from his divine Person. The soul at regeneration is born of a spiritual influence, called by Peter "an incorruptible seed," and not only so, but positively and immediately of God the Holy Ghost, as a distinct Person in the Godhead. This influence the Lord calls "water," as he spoke to the woman of Samaria of "a well of water springing up into everlasting life," (John 4:14) and as he cried in the temple, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38) What in the world has literal water to do with a spiritual birth? How can a few drops of water, or a river full, whether the body be sprinkled by it or immersed in it, open

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a man's eyes, ears, or heart to see, hear, or feel spiritual things? It must at best be a corruptible birth that is produced by a corruptible agency, and can no more save or sanctify the soul, than such a new birth as Nicodemus asked the Lord about if it were in any way possible.

iii. But the Lord adds that he will pour "floods upon the dry ground." How often does the soul, born and taught of God, feel that it is this "dry ground!" It would fain be fruitful in every good word and work; it would be adorned with every grace of the Spirit within, and with every good and godly fruit without. Let no one think that the child of God is careless or indifferent either as to inward or outward fruit. There is nothing too holy, too heavenly, too spiritual, or too gracious which the child of grace would not desire inwardly to experience and outwardly produce. But he feels that he cannot by any exertion of his own produce this fruitfulness after which he sighs. As well might a barren field convert itself into a fruitful garden, without being tilled by human hand or without rain from the sky, as a soul that knows and feels its own barrenness produced by its own exertions a crop of the fruits of righteousness. But the Lord that knows the desire of the heart and its inward mourning over its own barrenness, has given in the text a sweet and gracious promise, "I will pour floods upon the dry ground." A partial shower would not be enough. The dry ground would soon absorb a few drops of summer rain. Floods must come either from the skies, or from the streams of that river which makes glad the city of God, to produce this mighty change. In the promise, then, that he will pour floods, the Lord has pledged to give enough to soften and mollify the hardest, driest, most hardened heart. Thus, as Job said, "God maketh my heart soft;" (Job 23:16) and the Psalmist, speaking of the earth as the type of the soul, says, "Thou makest it soft with showers." (Ps. 65:10) Till the heart, then, is made soft from above, it remains barren and unfruitful. These "floods" are the promises poured into the soul, the love of God shed abroad in the heart, the manifestations of Christ and of his atoning blood,

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the inflowings of grace as superabounding over all the aboundings of sin, and the flowing of peace as a river into the contrite spirit.

iv. But the Lord, as though he would not leave us at any uncertainty what he means by pouring water and floods, has added, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." The Lord here does not seem to address this promise to godly parents so much as to Zion viewed spiritually as the mother of God's family. Thus we read, "Jerusalem, which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all." (Gal. 4:26) And thus God, speaking from heaven to Zion, his earthly abode below, says to her, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed." Zion, the Church, might be looking round and saying, "O where is my spiritual seed? Where are my children? How few in number! Shall I ever be blessed with a more numerous spiritual progeny? As one is taken home, shall I bear another on my knees?" The Lord then to reassure the heart of his Zion that he will not leave her childless, here promises that he will pour his Spirit upon her seed; that there shall rise up children who will call her blessed; that she shall have spiritual sons and daughters, who "shall gather themselves together and come to her." (Isa. 41:18) He thus fulfills his gracious promise: "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord." (Isa. 54:1) God has always had and ever will have a Church on earth. The promise given to Jesus was, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed;" "he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." (Isa. 53:10,11) We sometimes doubt and fear, seeing the low state of the Church and the paucity of real Christians, whether soon the Lord will have any to fear and love his great name. But he is faithful to his promise, and would sooner raise up children unto Abraham of the very stones of the street than "break his covenant or alter the thing that is gone out of his lips. Once has he sworn by his holiness," and he need not repeat the oath, "that he will not lie

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unto David." (Ps. 89:34,35) When our heads lie in the grave, Jesus will have a seed to serve him, (Ps. 22:30) and Zion shall still be a fruitful mother of children.

v. But what is it "to pour out the Spirit," and what does the Spirit do when he is poured out? The Spirit is "poured out" when he is poured into the soul; this is always followed, as well as known, by certain effects. I will name a few of these.

1. The first is conviction of sin. "When he is come, he will reprove [margin, "convince"] the world of sin." (John 16:8) When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost and the Holy Spirit attended the word with power, the hearers "were pricked to the heart." It was not a gentle prick, as with a point of a pin, but a stabbing to the heart as with a dagger or a piercing as with a sword, as the word means. Indeed, it was "the twoedged sword" in their conscience, of which we read that it "pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow." (Heb. 4:12) Thus was the publican pierced with guilt in the temple; the jailer at Phillippi; and Paul himself when the Law entered his conscience, and for three days, from distress of soul, he neither ate nor drank.

2. He also pours out his Spirit upon Zion's seed as a Spirit of grace and of supplications. This is expressly given, according to his own promise, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplications." (Zech. 12:10) This the Lord always pours out upon the soul when he is pleased to quicken it into spiritual life. When he would give to Ananias the strongest proof of Paul's conversion, he said, "Behold, he prayeth." I felt and found this in myself as the very first mark and evidence of my soul being made alive unto God, that he poured this Spirit of prayer and supplication upon me. Before this, I said my prayers regularly enough; but I never knew what spiritual prayer meant, nor what it was to pour out my heart before God.

3. But in pouring out the Spirit, the Lord also pours it out upon the soul as a spirit of faith; for faith we are expressly told (Eph. 2:8) is "the gift of God," and is declared by the Holy Ghost to be "a fruit

of the Spirit.” (Gal. 5:22) The Gospel is only in this way made “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” Thus without the Spirit, there is no faith; and without faith, there is no salvation. Without this spirit of faith, we can neither believe nor speak, that is, acceptably to God and to his people, according to the language of the Apostle “we having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak.” (2 Cor. 4:13) There is a natural faith and a spiritual faith; a faith in the head and a faith in the heart; a faith of tradition, superstition, and will-worship, and a faith that works by love, purifies the heart, overcomes the world, unites to Christ, and the end of which is the salvation of the soul.

4. In pouring out his Spirit upon Zion’s seed, the Lord bestows upon it also a good hope through grace; for the Spirit reveals Christ, his love, and grace, and blood, and by thus inwardly manifesting him, raises up a sweet hope in his salvation, “as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and entering into that within the veil.” (Heb. 6:19)

5. But in pouring out of his Spirit, he especially pours into the soul the heavenly gift and divine grace of love, for that is the greatest blessing that he can bestow, being the gift of himself, who is love. All other gifts and graces fall short of this, for we read, “And now abideth faith, hope, love, but the greatest of these is love.” (1 Cor. 13:13)

But I by no means intend to limit the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit to those which I have already named, for, in pouring out his Spirit upon Zion’s seed, he pours out therewith every spiritual blessing that there is in his heart or in his hands to bestow. There is not a single favor in the bosom of God towards his Zion that is not virtually contained in the pouring out of his Spirit upon her. I say virtually, because it is not always actually, or at least in experimental feeling and enjoyment. He adds, therefore—

vi. “And my blessing upon thine offspring;” for most certainly when he pours out his Spirit he pours his blessing also. And how

expressive the word “blessing!” When God blesses what favor does he keep back? What good does he not bestow? When he said to Abraham, “In blessing I will bless thee,” what more could he say to assure him that he should be blessed with a sense of his presence and love here, and with the eternal enjoyment of himself hereafter? “Let them curse, but bless thou?” (Ps. 109:28) Whatever earthly good you may enjoy, without the blessing of God it will but prove a curse; whatever afflictions fall to your earthly lot, if God bless, they must all eventually be made a blessing. Nor is this blessing niggardly given, for the Lord has here promised that he will pour it out! It shall be given as profusely and as abundantly as the Spirit himself. Nor shall Zion doubt either the blessing itself or the source whence it comes, for it carries its own evidence, shines in the light of its own testimony, and manifests itself by its own effects. And does not the contrast between the dry ground and the promised showers of blessing enhance it all the more? Your very barrenness and sterility make the promise all the more suitable and therefore all the more sweet. If you look into yourself, a barren wilderness meets your view. If you look up, you see the clouds of blessing floating in the pure sky. You see that the Lord has promised to pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. You beg of him to fulfill that promise to your soul. You have no other plea but his own word of promise, no other recommendation but your own miserable barrenness. He enables you to cry to him. He listens to that cry, and in his own time pours water upon your thirsty soul and floods upon your dry and parched heart. Oh, may a sense of our poverty and destitution be ever a means, in his sacred hand, of leading us to seek that blessing which he alone can bestow!

II. But let me now show what are the immediate effects of the Lord’s pouring water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground—”They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.”

i. The Lord’s people are spoken of here as at once “springing

up” under the influence of the water poured and of the floods given. We cannot mistake the spiritual meaning of the figure, as it is so clear and certain. In those burning regions where rains does not fall at all seasons from the skies, as in our dripping clime, the effect of copious showers falling upon the parched vegetation is almost miraculous. A few days completely reverse the scene, and on every side vegetation springs up as if it started with gigantic growth out of the bosom of the heated soil. To this the figure in the text alludes—”They shall spring up,” that is Zion’s children, “as among the grass,” with all that young and active growth which so clearly manifests the power and blessing of God.

But I think we may take the words as chiefly applicable to the springing up of the graces of the Spirit in the heart, which before hung, as it were, their drooping heads, and lay hidden beneath the grass by which they were covered; for you will observe that it does not say that they sprang up “as the grass,” but “among the grass.” What the grass is I shall presently show.

1. The first grace that springs up is a godly fear of God’s great name. This is the first fruit of the grace of God in the soul, and is therefore called “the beginning of wisdom,” and “a fountain of life to depart from the snares of death.” Before the Lord was pleased to communicate his grace to your soul, you had no godly, reverential, filial awe and fear of his great and terrible Name. You might have had remorse of conscience, fears of hell, dismal apprehensions of the wrath to come; but you had no holy awe upon your spirit, no realizing, believing, abiding sense of the power and presence, majesty and greatness, purity and holiness, of the great and glorious self-existing Jehovah, who fills the heaven and earth with his glory. This is a new covenant grace, according to the Lord’s own word by the prophet Jeremiah, where he has promised to put his fear in the hearts of those with whom he makes an everlasting covenant. (Jer. 32:40) No sooner, then, does the rain come and the flood is poured forth, than a godly fear of the great name of Jehovah springs up in the heart, as a flower in Spring shoots

2. By the side of this godly fear, there springs up into active exercise faith, of which I have before spoken as the gift of God. It is true that faith deals at first more with the terrors of the law and the manifestations of God’s displeasure against sin, than with the promises and truths of the Gospel; it is true that at first it more regards God as an angry Judge than as a loving Father and eternal Friend; but let us not forget that there is but “one faith;” (Eph. 4:5) and that the difference of feeling does not arise from the difference of faith, but of the objects presented to it. Faith is the eye of the soul; and as it is the same eye which views objects that give pain and objects which produce pleasure, so it is the same faith which believes the law as believes the gospel, which credits the threatenings as well as credits the promises. But this faith often, so to speak, droops and hangs its head amid the grass, for want of those genial showers which alone can make it spring and grow. The Apostle blessed God because the faith of the Thessalonian believers grew exceedingly. (2 Thess. 1:3) But why was it but because “The Gospel came not unto them in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance?” (1 Thess. 1:5) It is impossible for faith to grow unless the Spirit is poured out and the blessing of God given, but then it at once springs up into active and vigorous growth.

3. But there is another grace of which I have before spoken that often lies hidden under the dry and withered grass, which well nigh buries it under its spiry stem. This grace is hope; and a most blessed grace it is, for it has the special privilege of entering within the veil. Earth is too narrow a spot for hope to abide in; it seeks the skies, and taking firm hold of those divine realities which are within the veil, it patiently expects what it sees not. (Rom. 8:25) It is, therefore, said to save the soul—”we are saved by hope”—which it does by saving it on the one hand from the rocks of presumption, and on the other from the shoals of despair. But here it may be said to spring up as among the grass with the other graces of the Spirit,

for as the promises are applied with a divine power, and the truth of God is opened with more and more sweetness and preciousness, and the soul is enabled to realize more fully and clearly its interest in the precious blood of Christ, hope rises higher and higher, and spreads itself into a more vigorous and active growth.

4. Nor must we forget that with faith and hope there springs up also love. As the Lord is pleased to draw near and manifest his beauty and blessedness; as faith gets fuller and clearer glimpses and gleams of the lovely face of Jesus, of his Person, love, blood, and obedience; and as the word of promise drops into the heart with greater power and blessedness, love springs up toward him as so deserving of, and so drawing up to himself every secret and sacred affection of the heart. Whatever knowledge of the truth a man may profess, however clear his views, circumspect his walk, or consistent his life, if he has no love to Christ, he is in a perilous spot. That is a terrible word from the mouth of the Apostle, “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema”—that is, accursed. (1 Cor. 16:22) Love also to the saints of God springs up side by side with love to the Lord, for “every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.” (1 John 5:1) This is the first mark that the Scripture gives of a spiritual birth, for it declares that “we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.” (1 John 3:14)

5. By the side of filial fear, faith, hope, and love, there springs up also the graces of humility, brokenness of spirit, tenderness of conscience, godly sorrow for sin, self-loathing and self-abhorrence, and a putting of our mouth into the dust. Sin is never seen in so hideous a shape as when viewed in the light of Jesus’ sufferings and sorrows in the garden and upon the cross; and thus, as faith believes in a sorrowing, crucified Saviour, as hope anchors in his bleeding side, and as love flows out toward his suffering Majesty, repentance and godly sorrow melt the sinner’s heart into true penitence, and if he could weep himself away in tears of contrition,

he would willingly and gladly do so, and never, never sin again against such bleeding, dying love.

6. Patience also springs up to bear the weighty cross and carry it with submission and resignation to the divine will, knowing that his wisdom appoints it, his love accompanies it, and his grace supports under it.

7. There springs up, too, side by side with these more distinct fruits of the Spirit, many gracious desires, heavenly longings, and earnest aspirations toward God of all our mercies. Smitten with a sight and sense of his glory and blessedness the soul ardently desires to know him more and serve him better. What it has in hand is so little compared with what it has in hope; and its enjoyment falls so far short of what it sees in the Lord to be experienced and enjoyed.

8. Many sweet thoughts, heavenly meditations, pleasing prospects, enlarged views of truth, and lifting up the heart in praise for mercies received, spring up also as a part of the crop of righteousness which pushes its way through the thick grass. The truth and power of the Scriptures are peculiarly seen and felt, and the word of God is opened up and made very precious. At this season it is with the soul as in nature. How beautifully in spring, under the influence of the early rains, do the flowers spring up among the grass—the little violet shrouding itself modestly under the leaves, yet giving forth a sweet fragrance; the lily of the valley, in all its virgin purity, drooping its head—emblem of the soul bending in lowly humility under a sense of God’s mercy and love; the pale primrose, looking up, with its eye ever fixed upon the sun; and many other a woodland gem, all in their meek and quiet beauty singing their silent hymns to their great Creator’s praise. So do the various graces of the Spirit under the showers dropped from heaven spring up as “among the grass.”

But what may we understand by the expression “grass?” May we not interpret it as emblematic of the flesh, according to the words of the prophet, “All flesh is grass!” (Isa. 40:6) All the pride,

pomp, and beauty of the flesh are but as grass, for “all the glory of man is as the flower of grass,” (1 Pet. 1:24) which, when cut down by the scythe, soon withers, is gathered into heaps, and swept away out of the field. In this point of view we may consider the children of God to spring up amongst the sons of men as flowers among the grass, bedecking it with beauty—the only beautiful objects among the green blades. O, how blessed it is to see the children of God springing up here and there amongst the grass which everywhere so thickly covers the mead! Have we no such flowers here? Time may have been when you were hidden beneath the grass—when, though a flower in God’s sight, your root was in the dust, and you lay undistinguished amidst the thick herbage. But being a flower, one of the Redeemer’s own lilies, among whom he feeds (Songs 6:3) when the rain of heaven dropped upon you, you sprang up amid the crowded blades which before hid you from view.

We may view this congregation as a mead of grass; for are there not many here who are yet in the flesh, uncalled, unregenerate? But here and there is there not a flower springing up out of it? Would that I could see the mead well sprinkled with them; and some the Lord may see at present hidden beneath the grass, who will one day raise up their heads more distinctly and visibly out of it.

ii. Though I have hitherto spoken chiefly of the graces of the Spirit, as intended by the expression, “They shall spring up as among the grass,” yet I am not insensible that it is susceptible of another interpretation, and that it may mean not so much the graces of the Spirit in the individual believer, as the children of God who spring up, as I have just shown, out of and amidst the surrounding world. But we now come to an expression which seems to point more distinctly to the family of God, for the promise goes on to say, “as willows by the water courses.” The willow, we know, cannot exist without water: it must be near the brook or river, or it withers and dies. Take a young willow and plant it upon a mountain top or in the sandy desert, and it soon droops and perishes. But take the

barest twig off the willow, and plant it near a stream, so that the water may reach it, and it will soon shoot downwards and push a vigorous stem upwards. So it is with the child of grace: he must live by the river side; he must dip his roots into that “river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God,” and by it he must be continually bathed or he droops and dies. He cannot live in the world, away from Jesus, his word, ordinances, house, people, presence, Spirit, and grace, any more than a willow can live upon the mountain top; he cannot live among carnal men, cut off from union and communion with his great and glorious Head, any more than the willow can thrive and grow in the wilderness. How beautifully is this set forth by the prophet Jeremiah, “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.” (Jer. 17:7,8) The saints of God, then, grow like “willows by the water courses.” The willow is not a tree beautiful to the sight; it does not grow with all the noble grandeur of the oak or tower aloft in stately dignity like the poplar, but is usually low of growth, and is ever bending and weeping over the river, as if to inhale the refreshing moisture which rises in invisible vapor from its bosom. Neither its leaf nor flower possesses striking beauty; and yet the tender branches swaying in the wind have a grace of their own as they bend and droop over the stream. And is it not so with the saints of God? How enduring, too, is the willow. What life in every branch! and even when pollard or cut down low, still reviving “through the scent of water,” (Job 14:9) and shooting out its branches afresh. May we not see in this a fitting emblem of the child of God, and admire how, like the willow, he preserves life and vigor when the nobler trees of the forest are blown down by the storm or are cut down for fuel?

III. But we may now proceed to examine, with God’s blessing,

the permanent results of the Lord's pouring out water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground, the abiding effects of his pouring his Spirit upon Zion's seed, and his blessing upon her offspring: "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Here are four permanent effects, which are spoken of as resulting from the Lord's pouring water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground.

1. The first is the fruit of the lip, as manifested in power given to believe and speak with stronger confidence than before enjoyed. "One shall say, I am the Lord's:" that is, through the blessing of God resting upon the soul, the favored object shall be able, in the language of faith, without presumption and without hypocrisy, to say that he is the Lord's own peculiar property and possession; that he belongs to him by inseparable ties of union and fellowship. But can he speak thus unless the Lord has first assured him by his own lips that he is his? Surely nothing short of the Lord's own testimony in the heart can raise up a faith and a confidence so strong as this. Guilty doubts and fears must be all removed before such believing language can issue from the lips. It is the favored bride's own declaration: "My beloved is mine, and I am his." (Songs 2:16) Nor can any one, without presumption, say, "I am the Lord's" unless the Lord himself has previously spoken to him inwardly with his own blessed voice and whispered "Thou art mine." Yes; it is only then that the soul can echo back his words in the sweet response of faith, and say, "I too am thine." What man can honestly or virtuously say to a woman, "Thou art mine," or what woman can chastely or meekly reply, "I too an thine," unless marriage or betrothal warrant such language? If there be neither of these, the one cannot say to the other without a blush, "Thou art mine:" nor can there come back the responsive echo, "Thou too art mine." So, similarly, there must be a marriage union with, or a betrothal unto

Christ before any one can say, in the fear and love of God, "I am the Lord's" And how can this union take place except the Lord betroth us to himself in "lovingkindness and in mercies," according to his own promise? (Hosea 2:19) Except the Lord be pleased to give this faith, it is but presumption to use the words; but if he bestow that assurance and give that persuasion, it is no longer presumption, but a blessed confidence which he himself sanctions. O, how rich, how great the blessing, when, by the work and witness of the Holy Ghost, the soul can say, in all the meek confidence of living faith and godly fear, "I am the Lord's—his by electing grace—his by sovereign gift—his by redeeming blood—his by dying love—his by regeneration—and his by indwelling possession." For if the Lord's at all, we are his wholly. Just as when a man has a house of his own by purchase or heirship: it is wholly his, from cellar to roof; every stone and every timber; every part of the house, from the foundation to the topmost tile, are all his. So it is with the soul, if it be the Lord's. All that the Lord is, he is to it. When then the soul can say, "I am the Lord's;" it may add, "I have now everything which the Lord can give, for he has given me himself; and in bestowing himself he has bestowed everything belonging to himself. He has given his blood to redeem my soul from the lowest hell; his obedience to justify me from all things from which I could not be justified by the law of Moses; his love to seal my heart for ever to himself; his Spirit to teach, lead, and sanctify me to his own glory, and make me meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. He has thus given me everything to lead me safely through life: a promise that he will be with me in death; and a pledge that he will land me happily in eternity." Are not all these rich blessings comprehended in the simple expression, "I am the Lord's?" There may be but few here who can speak thus confidently. The Lord may have begun a good work in their heart; but may not yet have sealed a clear testimony in their breast, enabling them to appropriate these words as their own heartfelt language. And yet you may be the Lord's, though not able

to call him yours by that endearing title; you may be the Lord's by quickening grace, without having attained to that degree of faith and grace which may one day be your happy portion. There is a growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; there is a going on from step to step in the divine life; and you may possess faith without possessing the full assurance of faith. Many a poor doubting soul has thought it never would be able to say, "I am the Lord's," without one wavering doubt. But the time did come when he could say it; and you will have it before you die; nor will you be able to lay your head on a dying pillow in a sweet peace, until you can use the words, "I am the Lord's," so as to be able to close your eyes upon earth, with the sweet confidence of opening them again in heaven, to see the Bridegroom of your soul without a veil between.

2. But the text also adds, "Another shall call himself by the name of Jacob." Jacob was a wrestler, for he wrestled all night with the angel; and by wrestling he obtained the blessing. There seems to be some allusion to this circumstance, for lower down we find the word "Israel" made use of—the name which God himself gave to Jacob when by wrestling he prevailed with Him. So at present you may be a wrestling Jacob, but have not yet come off a prevailing Israel. You may not be without a sense of guilt and bondage at times in your conscience, and may often doubt and fear whether the root of the matter be in you, because you cannot use the language of assurance which we have just been considering. Still you may be a wrestling Jacob. The Lord may have put his Spirit in you to enable you to wrestle with him for the blessing, and yet he may not have given you that appropriating faith whereby you can believe that he is yours, and can call him such. How full was the patriarch Jacob of doubt and fear when his own life, and that of his wife and children, lay in the very hands of the injured Esau! But it was this very fear which made him wrestle all the harder, and more fervently cry out, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." Can

you not say, "I am seeking for a blessing of this kind with all my heart; I am wrestling with God for it by prayer and supplication, and nothing less can satisfy me?" If this be your experience, you certainly may "call yourself by the name of Jacob."

3. The next effect spoken of is "Another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord:" that is, shall set to his seal that God is true. In earthly covenants and leases, and legal deeds of a similar nature, when a man signs his name and subscribes the document, it is a proof that he has a personal interest in the transaction of which it is a record. There is a similar subscription not with pen and ink, but by a spiritual hand signing and sealing the truth of the Gospel. So when you see and feel what the Gospel is; its suitability, truth, and blessedness, can you not, as it were, subscribe it with hand and heart, and say, "I love this Gospel; I can set to my seal that this is the truth which suits my soul; I want no other Gospel but this by which to live and die? I believe it is of God, for he has made it his own power unto my salvation; and whatever may be said against it, I bind it to my heart as the truth of God, the sweetness and blessedness of which I have felt in my own soul?" This is receiving the love of the truth so as to be saved thereby.

But we may attach another meaning to the words. The Lord has given you, it may be, in some time of trial and affliction, a promise, and that promise you see that he is still fulfilling. Now, as the Lord keeps fulfilling this promise, whether it be in Providence or grace, you subscribe with your hand to him, as if you said "I can deliberately write 'Amen' to this promise: I can say the Lord has fulfilled, yes, he is even now fulfilling it." Or take another meaning of the words. You subscribe with your hand to the Lord when your soul feels heartily willing to be his for evermore. As in signing a contract, a man by attaching his signature virtually says thereby, "I agree to the bargain, and I mean as well as I can to carry out its intentions and contents;" so when you spiritually subscribe with your hand to the Lord, it is as though you said thereby "I give myself wholly up to the Lord, for I want none but him. I want

the Lord to be my God; for him to be my all in all. I willingly and deliberately subscribe my desire to be wholly and solely his; and O may he ratify my handwriting by putting his own beneath it and attaching to it his own seal, that the deed may stand ratified for ever and ever in the court of heaven.”

4. The last effect is—”And shall surname himself by the name of Israel.” As Jacob represents a wrestler in the court of grace, so Israel is the emblem of one who has obtained the blessing. When, therefore, any wrestling Jacob has prevailed with God by strength of arm, he may surname himself by the name of Israel. He can then say—”I have wrestled with God for the promised blessing, and have obtained it. I have cried unto the Lord, and he has heard by cry. I have spread my petition before him, and he has at last granted it.” So wrestled and so prevailed Hannah, David, Hezekiah, and many a saint both dead and living.

Now, can you find in your soul any of the experience described this morning? Begin from the beginning; and go thorough the whole, and see whether you can lay your finger upon any one portion as descriptive of anything that you have ever felt or known. Begin with the “dry ground,” as descriptive of spiritual thirst; go on to the “water” poured, and the “floods” given; to the springing up “as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.” Can you thus go on step by step so as to find some of these effects to have been produced in your soul, until you can ultimately reach the grand point of all, so as to be able to say—”I am the Lord’s,” and surname yourself by the name of Israel? Thus we have seen, I trust, in our text, the work of grace traced out from beginning to end, and if you can realize some portion of your experience in it, or if you can find anything descriptive of your state and case in what I have laid before you from it, the Lord be praised. He will surely carry on the work thus happily begun; he will not leave it incomplete or unaccomplished, and when you are fully able to say, in the language of sweet assurance, “I am the Lord’s” he will ratify it with his own voice from heaven, and say—”Thou art mine, and

169 The Blowing Of The Gospel Trumpet

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Thursday Evening,

October 28, 1858

A Posthumous Sermon

“And it shall come to pass in that day that the great trumpet shall be blown; and they shall come that were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.”

Isaiah 27:12

Ever since the fall, man has been so deeply sunk in ignorance of the only true God that it requires the special teaching of God in the soul to make him wise unto salvation, and this teaching is not always nor often felt to be of a very pleasant nature. Religion must be burnt in us. We have not to learn lessons of consolation, of sweet manifestations of Christ's love and blood, or sit at his feet and listen to his words, as Mary, merely; but we need frowns as well as smiles, the rod, and that very often, as well as the encouraging look.

Whatever a man may have known and felt of the sweetness and preciousness of the things of God in his soul, he soon forgets them, and except the Lord revives the work again and again in his heart, he soon slips into carelessness, carnality, and death, unless the Lord is pleased to bring him into some trial, to exercise his soul with some new rod or frown, and show him what he is as a sinner, and what God is as a Saviour. We find all the promises of the gospel made to the poor and needy. It seems as though the Holy Ghost had to give everything that he could devise in his love and infinite wisdom, to describe the state of man, and what the saints of God feel when the Lord takes them in hand, to teach them what is for their good.

We have not only a precious promise in our text, that “the great trumpet shall be blown:” but a description also of those to

whom the promise is made; not only a description of the blowing of the great trumpet, but of the characters also who hear the sounds of the great trumpet—what they do and where they come to worship—“in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” But we have also their state described, so that it seems as though they were the last persons to hear, believe, and live. In opening up these words I shall, with God's blessing,

I.—First, describe the characters spoken of in our text, which are depicted in this strong expression, “those that are ready to perish in the land of Assyria and the outcasts in the land of Egypt.”

II.—Secondly, the blowing of the great trumpet.

III.—Thirdly, what is the effect of the blowing of the great trumpet, that “they shall come that were ready to perish from the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt.”

IV.—And fourthly, what they shall do when they come, “they shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.”

Now I will not say that these words have not a prophetic reference, so that they may have a bearing beyond an experimental meaning; but I shall let that pass; because we cannot have very clear notions of future events which may take place. The words are applicable to the children of God now, and instead of speculating, therefore, let us see how they bear upon things present.

The first character, then, spoken of is one “ready to perish in the land of Assyria.” The Lord himself declares that none of his sheep shall perish, but they are within a hair's breadth of perishing; they never will sink into final despair, but they shall be so exercised in their feelings as to be on the borders of it, like that Amalekite, of whom we read, who was found after three days and three nights in the desert, and there was no breath in him; but they brought him to life, and gave him nourishment, and he was enabled to tell of what had been done in Ziklag: so the saint of God is brought very low and is almost gone when the Lord comes and raises him up.

And what is there to prevent the Lord from casting that soul into prison? Who is to pay one mite, much more all the debt?

Now when the Lord comes with power into a sinner's conscience, it brings him off from all legal hope; he sinks down into a fit of despair. He looks up and sees an angry God, and within a guilty conscience. His prayers even, are mingled with sin, and the law says, "Pay me that thou owest," and then he is ready to perish. He cannot yield the obedience the law requires. The law never knows pity nor pardon; but keeps saying, "Do and live, disobey and die," and when any old sin, or all the long black catalogue of his sins is laid upon his conscience, and he thinks how this holy God has looked upon him from the days of his infancy to the present moment, and what that eye has seen, nothing but one long course of sin from the first hour that he drew his vital breath up to the moment when his conscience feels guilty before God, what anguish takes hold of him! He looks through all his life and cannot find a single spot wherein he is not guilty, and he says of his good actions they are vile! What he did in the service of God so far from being done with an eye to God's glory was done from hypocrisy! His profession seems to be the blackest thing of all his black life. A man who feels this will feel ready to perish.

Again he is ready to perish with hunger. No one gives him aught to eat. He may sit under a legal minister, he talks to those with whom he is mixed up in profession, and as he does not know the sweetness of the gospel he is ready to perish with hunger. He is like the poor prodigal, there is bread in his father's house, enough and to spare; but he is starving. Now the dead professors never starve; for some can feed upon doctrines, others upon chaff, and others upon legal duties, ordinances, and rites, and ceremonies, duties in which the heart is not, and where there is not one gracious feeling in the whole matter; but the living soul cannot feed upon husks like these, he knows that nothing can save him but mercy revealed to his soul, and if mercy does not reach his soul, into despair he must sink, he must die an unpardoned sinner; he is in feeling gone to despair; he cries to the Lord, but thinks the Lord cannot hear; he reads book after book, but he cannot see anything

that suits him; he is a child of God in the wilderness, and there is no water, no shadow of a great rock of love, no dropping of the dew of God's favour; therefore, in this wilderness he is falling in despair; he must hang on to something about himself and he lays hold of self-righteousness.

A man will always cleave to himself, and when he is ready to perish then he lies upon the sand without power to take hold of anything; he stretches himself on the sand without power to lift up a cry, and then he is ready to perish, and if he has had his evil heart opened up to him very much, he feels that he can be nothing less than a poor miserable creature. And Satan may come in and tell him to put an end to himself. He will say, "You are only adding sin to sin; because God will never pardon a sinner like you."

This is a man ready to perish, and though all the saints of God may not go so deep in the matter as this, yet they, for the most part, are brought down to be ready to perish; for if they were never ready to perish they would never hear the great trumpet blow. Have you never fallen down before God at night and felt that before morning your soul might be in hell? distressed in your conscience, seeing what an awful sinner you were! What an awful wretch! What a foul monster! If you have been exercised with these feelings you know what it is to be ready to perish.

But there is another character. The text speaks of the outcasts in the land of Egypt. There might have been a time with you when you were thought a nice person, whether you were among the church people or among the dissenters, you were everybody's choice, hardly anybody had a better word than you, and as long as you went with them they flattered you and you flattered them, and you got on very well; but when life came unto your soul, and the fear of God with life, and your conscience became tender before God, and you began to see yourself a sinner, you found that you could not hear the minister you did before, nor mix with the people you did before, and they thought something had happened to you, you were not so agreeable as you used to be; a change had come upon

you, and now you are a very disagreeable person; you begin to find fault with the minister and the people; to you nothing seems right without or within, for when our consciences become exercised, and our eyes are in some measure opened, we begin to see things as regards others.

You may have felt an outcast yourself, and it is a very painful feeling until the Lord comes and tells us he has not cast us off; but dead professors will cast us out if we don't sanction and approve and give countenance to their deceitfulness and deceitful actions, and if we speak conscientiously in these days. If we did but know what hearts these were that are not guided by soul realities we should understand how it is they cannot bear anything that brings dissatisfaction; they would have everything covered over.

But he whose soul is brought out of itself cannot sanction anything of this kind; he must have matters straight between his own soul and others. Therefore such a person must be a troubler, and he will very soon begin to be an outcast. Now the first step is to be cast out of the profane world and then out of the professing world, even cast out by many who fear God, because perhaps they have not walked in the same temptations, nor have they been exercised by the same trials, and even if some of the saints of God would receive us, we may feel ourselves cast out. All this is a time of trial, and then there is a further and still deeper trouble than that, which consists in feeling ourselves so vile, base, and foolish as to be unfit for the notice of God or men, to be cast out of the church and congregation as unfit for anybody's notice, quite undeserving of anybody's approbation.

I don't say that all the saints of God have to feel this to the extent I have described; but as a fisherman must cast his net pretty broad to catch the fish, so the minister must cast the net pretty broad to catch all the living fish. I don't mean to say all the people of God go to the same depths of being "ready to perish," or are to the same extent "outcasts." But they all must know something of these states, and the depth of the work of God upon their soul,

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for the most part, will be proportionate to the experience of being ready to perish and of being an outcast.

The most painful is to be an outcast from God. What a painful feeling, to have sinned against God to such a degree that he will not take any notice of us, that he has cast us out, and will not have anything to do with us any more! It is to be forsaken apparently of God and man, and there is nothing left but to die and to be put out of the way, or but a step between us and death! And then the devil will say, "Why not take the final step? What is there to live for, no friend or acquaintance to take any notice of thee, God hiding his face!" If the saints of God are outcasts of the world, the professing church, and seem sometimes cast out of God himself, what is to hinder them then from being cast into the lake of fire and brimstone?

II.—Why, what I come to in the second place, which is the blowing of the great trumpet. It shall hinder them. The great trumpet means the Lord's trumpet. It is a great trumpet because God himself blows it, and he blows through it blasts that waken the dead, which reach the ears of those who were ready to perish and enter into their heart and conscience; but for this text they would give up all hope and sink into despair. It is a great trumpet, being a trumpet that will enter the ears of those ready to perish, like the trumpet that shall waken the dead at the last day. This trumpet is the trumpet of the gospel figured by the silver trumpet, and it is to have a certain sound, or else it cannot be known what is the meaning, what the trumpet sounds. It resounds "Salvation! salvation! through the blood of the Lamb!" These are the sounds that issue out of the mouth of this great trumpet when the Holy Ghost blows it and gives it sweet melody. Salvation for those who are ready to perish! Salvation for the outcasts!

Now theirs are the ears which are open to hear the notes of this great trumpet, and when the notes of the great trumpet reach their ears and make a sweet melody in their hearts it awakens them. Even some of you may have been or are now poor outcasts of God

and man, and you will know where and what you are, and how your ears are open for the way of salvation, and every note that drops into your soul causes a looking up to the source whence that sound comes; as John in heaven, when he heard the voice of the blessed Redeemer as the voice of the great trumpet, turned to see the voice that spake unto him.

So when the soul hears the trumpet blow, he looks up to see what the great trumpet announces. As you know, in a procession you hear the sound of the trumpet, which tells you that the procession is coming, and it directs your eye to where the trumpet is. So it is when men hear the trumpet of the gospel, they are all ears to hear what sound that trumpet may bring to their hearts. What news! And when that trumpet begins to tell of salvation and justification, and that salvation is all of Christ, who is the justifier from first to last of all them that believe in the work of Christ, the finished work, and mercy to poor sinners flows through the atoning blood, it begins to raise up a feeling in the soul to believe; then new life is communicated and it appears as though the trumpet's sound had communicated help to the soul.

Like the soldiers in battle, though they may be weak and faint yet as soon as they hear the trumpet's sound to call them "to battle" they form themselves into their ranks and rush upon the enemy. So in a spiritual sense, when the gospel trumpet sounds and the Holy Ghost blows it, and the sound reaches the heart, it raises up faith, hope, and love so as to move the depths of the heart and to enter into the secret recesses and feelings of the soul. But it is brought to this. There is salvation in Jesus Christ and in no other. Here the door of hope is opened for the guilty, perishing sinner, here God is seen a God full of mercy, compassion, and love; and as the trumpet is sounding more and more, it falls with more and more sweetness upon the heart, the grace, compassion, and mercy of God seem to enter the soul, with every note that the trumpet gives is Christ crucified and risen from the dead; but the voice of Christ is heard in the whole, and where he speaks there is life and

Has not your poor, dying, perishing, outcast soul sometimes been revived by the preached gospel? Power has reached your soul, and enabled you to believe in his blood and obedience and love; for it has come with such power and sweetness into your soul that it has raised you up and made you quite a new creature, and then you feel life communicated to your soul, that you can believe, hope, and love: it seems as though you could take one leap into the bosom of Christ, and embrace him as the very Bridegroom of your soul. The blessed trumpet makes such a sweet melody in the ears and hearts of those ready to perish, and of those poor outcasts who have neither hope nor help.

III.—And this brings me to my third point, What they shall do. "They shall come that were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt." They shall come: before, they could not come; they were too weak: they were ready to perish. What with the want of bread and water, and what with their terrible feelings, they were "ready to perish." They could scarcely lift one limb before the other to come to Jesus, and they were such "outcasts:" they felt so condemned, and so deserving of being cast out for ever and ever, that come they could not, they did not know how, they had scarcely a hope that he would take them, they were so afraid they should be rejected; therefore they feared that they might only add to their sin, hypocrisy, and presumption, and, therefore, they stayed away.

They feared that the invitation, "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price," was not for them. But its freeness, blessedness, and sovereignty now communicate such power to their souls, and strength to their limbs, and hope and love to their hearts, that come they must and will. Hence the trumpet bids them "Come", the trumpet sounds in the ears of every miserable outcast and backslider. The trumpet sounds in the ears of all such, "Come ye to the wedding." As they hear these words, and the words seem to fall in with their feelings and to be suitable

to them, then they come.

IV.—And to pass on to our fourth point, What do they do? “They worship the Lord in the holy mount of Jerusalem.” There is a holy mount at Jerusalem, Mount Zion, where Jesus sits, and where God has commanded the blessing, even life for evermore, and as the Apostle speaks, “Ye are come to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” There is a Mount Zion which represents typically and figuratively the gospel of Jesus Christ and salvation by atoning blood and justifying obedience; then they come to Mount Zion, and there they are received favourably; for in Mount Zion there is not a single frown, or anything that can terrify or fright back.

In Mount Zion the blessing is even life for evermore; so that when the poor outcasts hear the trumpet they come to Mount Zion and find every blessing that is in the power of God to bestow and in the heart of Christ to give, and which is revealed in the gospel. For this and for every other mercy to be manifested to them, they come to the holy mount at Jerusalem, and they feel it a holy mount. There God dwells in his holiness; for great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. They have been taught how great he is in a broken law; they have been taught he is a consuming fire. They revere his great and glorious name; for he is just in the law who is holy in the gospel, who is full of compassion. He is still Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Sabbaoth! and they find it is a holy mount; for there are the holy promises and precepts, the holy worshippers, holy enjoyments, holy affections, and holy desires.

It is a holy mount; for there holiness supremely dwells, there the holiness of God is made specially manifest. Believers who know anything of the gospel desire to have holy love, holy affections, holy desires, to be holy inwardly and outwardly, without which no man can see the Lord. When the gospel comes, it brings with it holiness and power, which the law knows nothing of, and raises up holy affections, holy desires and feelings; so that they find that

Mount Zion is not only a holy mount, but there they worship the Lord in the beauty of his holiness, in the sweet enjoyment of his manifested presence and love, and thus they worship Father, Son, and Holy Ghost with a reverential awe of the great name of God, and every spiritual and holy feeling that the Holy Ghost can and does raise up in a broken heart and tender conscience.

Here we have in our text all that true religion is from first to last, beginning with being ready to perish and being an outcast. Then we have the work of the law upon the conscience, and what God does to convince a man that he is a sinner, and make him to fear his great name, then we have the middle where the trumpet is blown, where the gospel blows its melodious tones, and where the sinner comes drawn to Mount Zion by the sweet melodious notes that sound from the holy mount. Then we have the worshipping of the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem, being filled with all holy desire, producing holy fruits, serving him in the gospel of his dear Son; and here we have a sweet and most blessed end.

Now have you experienced anything in the law or in the gospel, in the precept or in the promise, in the teaching of the Holy Spirit and the whole list of what the saints of God must know so as to be saved with an everlasting salvation? Can you lay hold on any part of this in your conscience that you have experienced in your soul? Any part of it; for you may perhaps be one ready to perish or an outcast, who sees nobody so bad as yourself, and fear that you may be cast out for ever; or you may have heard with sweet appropriation the melodious notes of the gospel, and delight in what you hear as being a sound so suitable to you; or you may have got to Jesus and there found pardon and peace, and you may be at times enjoying his sweet presence and worshipping the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem; but in his own good time and way the saints will go through all these spots; and where the Lord has begun, he will carry on, and no man shall pluck them out of Jesus' hand.

170 Profitable Teaching And Sure Guidance

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day morning,

October 31, 1858

"Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go."

Isaiah 48:17

The word of truth is full of the most precious promises, which whether viewed individually or taken collectively are worth thousands of gold and silver; not that I wish to despise or deprecate God's gifts; for it often happens, that the man that despises them most with his lips, is seen to seek after them the more greedily with his hands; but the Lord gives bountifully, be it little or much. If He has given little—"Godliness with contentment is great gain." If much, let those who possess it remember that they are stewards not proprietors.

But however we may value the supply of our earthly wants, yet, what are these compared to the riches of God's grace, and what is stored up in these promises, of which the apostle Peter says, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Pet. 1:4.) Now all these promises stand upon an immutable foundation; because they stand not only on the fixed purposes of God; but they stand also upon the solemn decrees of God, they stand upon the everlasting covenant "ordered in all things sure and steadfast," ratified in Christ, lodged in Him; and He applies these promises to the soul, being as we are told, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not men. (Heb. 8:2.)

Now these promises are only precious to those who believe. We must be taught of the Holy Spirit to feel our need of these

promises, we must be brought into the various situations to which these promises apply, we must be poor and needy and destitute, and brought to thorough beggary and bankruptcy, to complete insolvency, before these promises can drop into our souls in their full value. But the same thing that lays low, raises tip; the same thing that wounds, heals. And when the Lord has seen good to bring down in His providence or grace, then He is pleased in His own time and way to lift and raise up; and this He does by the application of His precious promises, which are then more valued than thousands of gold and silver.

We have a very blessed promise in the words before us—"Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, 'I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.'"

In opening up these words I shall with God's blessing:

I.—First, speak a little upon the character of the Speaker, who says of Himself that He is Israel's "Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

II.—Secondly, on the blessed statement or declaration which He makes, "I am the Lord thy God."

III.—Thirdly, of the special office which He holds as the Lord God of Israel, that He teaches her and that to profit. And:

IV.—Fourthly, what sure and heavenly guidance He affords, "Which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go."

I. How personal and individual the Lord is, "Thy Redeemer"—"Thy God"—"Teach thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." As though the Lord singled out an individual, a favoured individual, and speaking to him from His own courts of bliss, He addressed these words to his soul, as though there were no other upon earth to whom He spoke them. And that is the beauty and blessedness of an appropriating faith, that by virtue of an appropriating faith the soul is as much interested in the love, blood and grace of God, as though it was the only one in earth or heaven which enjoyed that favour. "Thus saith the Lord

thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” The Lord speaks here, and shall we not pay attention?

How does the Lord open that sublime prophecy in Isa. 1? “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth;” and why? “for the Lord hath spoken.” Well may the heavens give ear, and well may the earth attend; for the Lord hath spoken. When our excellent Queen sits annually upon her throne in Parliament, how every sentence that she utters is paid attention to, and how her speech is reported word by word, and sent from place to place to the ends of the earth; because she speaks as a queen with power; for, “Where the word of a king is there is power.” If then the Lord of heaven and earth, the King of kings, speak, are not His words to be attended to? If we listen to the words of an earthly monarch, shall we not listen to Him that sits as the King of kings on his exalted throne surveying and governing all things? What strong unbelief it is that makes us inattentive to the words of Him who speaks from the courts of heavenly bliss!

And what does He say? “Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” Surely, if we are under any feeling sense of what we are as sold into captivity, if we are under any feeling sense of the greatness of redeeming love, if we know anything of the power and efficacy of atoning blood, anything of the sufferings and sorrows of an incarnate God, surely we should open our ears and hear what the Redeemer says, when He speaks to us under this endearing relationship. But if there are any here who have felt no need of a Redeemer, have never groaned in captivity and bondage, then they can know nothing of redeeming love; but poor guilty sinners who know what it is to have sold themselves, and that without money, these prize the words of redeeming love; because they are so suitable to them in their sorrow and misery. But why should the Lord speak of Himself here as Israel’s Redeemer? Let us examine the words more closely; for we may gather up something that may profit our souls. Now sin, horrible sin, dreadful and damnable sin—I can give it no other word, for I feel it to be both

these—now this dreadful and damnable sin of ours, is the cause of all our misery. We inherited it not only from our first parents, but we have sinned ever since we came into being; yea, we were conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity, and so ever since we came forth into this world until the present time we have sinned in every thought, word and deed. Now when the Lord the Spirit begins His gracious work upon a sinner’s heart and conscience, one of the first things He makes him to feel is that he is a captive to sin. He feels in a position from which he cannot extricate himself. As the Church of England well speaks in one of her collects, “We are tied and bound with the chain of our sins.” Sin has cast around him a chain, from which he cannot extricate himself, and under the sense of sin he feels bound in captivity and bondage. How he hails the first gleam of light that shows him the way of escape out of his dungeon! Suppose you were travelling in a foreign land, and were arrested by one of its despots, and thrown into a deep vault by the side of some flowing river, how you would hail the first gleam of light that shone into this dungeon to give you hope that you would get your liberty again! So it is with a poor sinner. With the first tidings of redeeming mercy and of dying love, such rays and beams break in upon his mind that seem to dispel his captivity. What a sweet influence it is to him! How it breaks up those chains and bonds in which he is held so firmly and fast by the sense of sin which lies upon his conscience as a heavy load!

Many of the dear lambs of God are under legal taskmasters, in dead congregations, under a legal ministry, and they are mourning over their bondage, captivity, and death, because they never hear the sound of the gospel. There they are shut up in captivity; for the glad tidings of grace have never reached their ears, nor have the beams of salvation shone into their hearts. But when the Lord is pleased to bring salvation to their ears by the blood and obedience of the Lord the Lamb, and faith is raised up in their hearts to believe the message that the Holy Ghost brings them, they become manifestly “new creatures,” Christ is made precious to them, and

formed in their heart the hope of glory. And then He becomes their Redeemer, to redeem them from the hand of the enemy, from the hand of him who is stronger than they, from the grasp of Satan, the curse of the law and the dreadful condemnation of a guilty conscience; from the torturing doubts and fears instilled by the father of lies, and from the gloomy bondage that sin and guilt bring over the soul. But when the warm rays of salvation by grace appear on the horizon, how blessed are these beams! They raise up hope in the saint's heart, because they open up to him the way of escape and the truths of salvation. He sees that his sins may be or are pardoned, by which he can escape the damnation of hell, and be with Jesus, and dwell with Him in the courts of bliss for evermore. Then He is a "Redeemer," and He is also "The Holy One of Israel."

How holy is the Lord! because He is the holy Son of God. He is the Eternal Son of the Eternal Father in truth and love, and as such He is holy; for the seraphim and cherubim in the temple cry out before Him day and night without ceasing, "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Sabaoth!" Holy is the Father!

Holy is the Son! and Holy is the Holy Ghost! So that as the Son of God, the second person in the glorious Trinity, He is the "Holy One," and as man, as wearing a holy humanity, He is the "Holy One of Israel." All His thoughts when upon earth were perfectly holy, all His words were holy, all His sighs, groans, tears, sorrows, and griefs were holy, His sufferings unto death were all holy and His blood and obedience were holy and thus he is the "Holy One of Israel" in whom a Holy God can take pleasure. Now this is the Jesus to whom the eyes of our faith must look. Here is an encouragement for a storm-tossed soul, and here is salvation for a poor guilty sinner, a precious Saviour for those that feel their need of a Redeemer,— "The Holy One of Israel."

Now to whom do you look when your soul is exercised with various storms and guilt and fears—when your sins rise up to view like so many gaunt specters—when darkness and distress fill your

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mind, and you seem as if you must sink for ever? Do you look and cry to Him who is ready to save you? Does He ever stretch forth His hands towards you? Then you know him to be a "Redeemer"— "The Holy One of Israel." If you fix your eyes upon Him you are fixing your eyes upon Him who is ready to save, and if your eyes are fixed upon Him, you approve of Him whom God approves of. You receive Him whom God receives and the eyes of God look upon you with the same love and approbation that they look upon the "Holy One of Israel." "Look unto him and be ye saved all the ends of the earth."

II.—Now I pass on to our second point—the blessed declaration which this "Holy One of Israel" has given in the words, "I am the Lord thy God." Oh, what words are these, "I am the Lord thy God." Now how can He be this? How can He say, "I Myself;" looking to His poor Israel below, "I am the Lord thy God?" How became He the Lord their God? He became so by virtue of an everlasting covenant ordered in all things sure and steadfast; that is the foundation of the whole, the everlasting covenant wherein and whereby God the Father gave to Him the innumerable multitude who should be saved by His blood and obedience, and who should be members of His mystical body, that He might have a people in whom He could be glorified as the Lord most blessed, which subject He opens up in John 17 John's Gospel, chapter 17, where He says, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." And behold now He stands high up in the courts of heaven and says, "Behold I and the children which thou hast given me."

Now here are the children which God gave Him in eternity

to be His children, His pride, His jewels, His sheep, His pleasure, His delight, the members of His mystical body, that He should in them take an eternal delight, and in them be eternally glorified. Now the question is whether you or I have an interest in these precious realities? You approve of them as they drop from my lips. You cannot doubt what I say, nor disbelieve it; because it is commended to your consciences; still the question may arise and should arise—"Am I a partaker in these divine realities? Am I one of God's chosen ones? Did He elect me to eternal life? Was my name written down in the lamb's book? Was I, poor miserable I, given to Jesus in this heavenly council, in this divine engagement, in this everlasting covenant?"

Now in order to know this we must look a little to the dealings of this most blessed Jesus. Let us take a supposition. Here is a woman married many years ago to her husband; but she may get into a certain state of mind, and the question may arise whether this man whom she calls her husband is really her husband! It may be a temptation, a dream, a mental infirmity, or a suggestion of Satan that has overtaken her; and she will begin to enquire about when they were married, who performed the ceremony, and how things were, and she will look back and see that it is either a suggestion of Satan, a temptation, or a delusion that has taken hold of her, and when she can look back to the time when and the place where she was married, and recollect all the circumstances of that day when they became one, then this infirmity of mind, this wonderful dream or mental delusion is all dispersed, and it is proved beyond dispute that he is her husband and that she is his wife. So in grace, either from the weakness of your faith, the accusations of a guilty conscience, or from gloomy feelings within, you may doubt or question whether the marriage ceremony ever took place between your soul and Christ, whether He ever gave and put upon your finger the ring of wedded love, and called you by His name. You have to look back, and see if you can again recall the circumstances when the blessed majesty of heaven sealed His

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 love upon your conscience, put the ring of eternal union upon your finger, and bestowed upon you a sense of His love to enable you to call Him yours. Then if the Lord has ever bestowed a look of love upon you, He says, "I am the Lord thy God." He has taken possession of you, made you to know it; and sealed His love upon your heart, or if you cannot go so far as this as to say when you were one by a holy tie, yet are you engaged with Him? Have you renounced all other suitors and given your virgin heart and the affections of your spiritual mind to Jesus, that He may be yours, and has He on His side so far bespoke you as to have given you sometimes a smile, sometimes a touch with His gracious hand, or sent a sweet promise into your soul with power?

If you cannot say with appropriating faith, "My beloved is mine," yet you are in love with Him; He has wooed you, and you want no other lover; He has engaged your affections and given you that discovery of Himself that has made you love Him with a pure heart fervently. If you can get no further than this it is a mercy; for He is a Redeemer as well as the Lord God. If you feel a poor wretched sinner who cannot do anything to deliver your own soul and yet you are seeking help from the sanctuary, the happy day shall come when you the prisoner shall go free. When in darkness shew yourself men. Perhaps a great majority of the saints of God have had to be in the prison house a long time before taken out into the glorious liberty of the people of God, into the sweet enjoyment of the gospel day; yet they all got their freedom in His own good time.

III.—But I pass on to what the Lord says of those whom He claims as His, that he teacheth them to profit. "Which teacheth thee to profit." That is the first mark of our being the Lord's, that He becomes our teacher. We may have learned much from men, much from books, and the Bible itself may have instructed us in many things. You have heard me for twenty years, and surely have collected something, something has been stored up, in mind or memory, if not in heart and conscience. Thus you may have got

a good acquaintance with the theory of experience, or you may have got hold of a sound doctrine, and yet not have felt anything of the power of divine teaching and the work of the Holy Ghost upon the heart and conscience. Therefore, do not mistake a well-instructed head for a gracious heart, nor do you mistake a sound creed and consistent theory with a work of power and me living work of grace upon the conscience.

I fear many live and die under the awful mistake of believing that because they have a consistent theory of experience, because they profess to hear certain ministers and read certain books, and sit in a certain seat for years, they are thereby saints of God, when there may not be one grain of saving grace in their heart; but this is a mark of the Lord being the soul's Redeemer that the soul owns God as its teacher "which teacheth to profit." Now if you don't know this you are a poor, dark, ignorant wretch with all your learning; it may be that you can prattle very well about religion, but have you seen yourself a poor benighted wretch, so that there seems at times not a single ray of light in your soul? Do you know anything of darkness and clouds, of ignorance besetting your mind? It may be that you are now in the midst of darkness, darkness which may be felt, Egyptian darkness; then you are not under God's teaching; it has yet to come, light has not yet broken into your soul to show that darkness.

I cannot do with such very wise people, they know too much for me to instruct them; but when I see and come in conversation with a poor soul that begins to see and feel its ignorance, darkness and inability to do anything of itself; I can trace in it a desire, though feeble and faint, to get at a little heavenly teaching, and feel after faith, love, the fear of God, and His work upon the soul, then that comes which breaks up all that might hinder a union, and we see eye to eye in the things of God. If I had a child to teach I should first begin to inquire what he knew, and perhaps I should find that he knew very little; then I must begin at the beginning, commencing with the foundation. It is like an architect coming to

look at a house whose walls begin to bulge, and the slates on the roof of which seem as if they would break in. The owner may say, "Let us see whether we cannot patch it up a little," but the more the architect looks the worse he finds it to be; instead of being built of good sound rock, it is built perhaps of nothing but mud, and the timber is wretched deal, and everything else is put together in the same way, so that what with bad materials, bad treatment, and long service, he is afraid to touch it, for fear the whole should tumble upon him; thus he has to lay the foundation, and get up the building from the bottom.

So in grace, the Lord begins at the beginning, the plans and resolutions being laid out, and He will not take to building at first with His jewels and precious stones, but being a master workman, He makes thorough work of it, and He will teach you first lessons with His own finger upon the heart. He will teach you out of the law, "Blessed is the man that continueth in all things written in this book to do them," and "Cursed is the man that continueth not in all things to do them." He will teach you what a sinner you are! What a wicked heart you have! What the law is! How particular the commandment is! What a terrible curse is attached to it, and what Mount Sinai is, till you shall see the flashes of God's anger, and He will make you feel time after time in your soul, what a sinner you are, until you begin to think there never was such a wretch on God's earth before, you verily believe there never could have been a heart so full of sins, of bruises, and putrifying sores, and there never was a man or woman with a heart like yours, so filthy and polluted is it, and so full of base desires. Here is a little of the breaking in of the truth of God upon your heart, giving you to see light in God's light.

Now you begin to know a little for yourself, and you feel your way towards more knowledge, more teaching, more light, and power, and to have the truth of God opened up. You have now new views of the truth of God, and you think "What high doctrines these hold! but after all, these are the men, these are the people,

these are the sermons, these are the very things that suit my naked, guilty, filthy, distressed soul, these point my poor sinful heart to the Redeemer, and these bring before my eyes the way by which my guilt and filth may be purged and washed away.” Now the Lord is teaching you this out of His word; for what a light does He cast upon His sacred truth! what light upon the Scriptures at times! a whole text is so full of light and sweetness, that it is like the honeycomb that cannot hold the honey, it is so full of it. So a text is sometimes so full of honey it cannot hold it, it drops through, as David says of his cup, “My cup runneth over,” it runs over with sweetness; so He teaches you out of the word, then afflictions “make us see what else would ‘scape our sight.” You have seen your poor tabernacle perhaps consuming away under disease, with a prospect of speedy dissolution before you. All these things try your mind, they make you conscious of what you never knew before, they open up the realities of eternal things, and lay eternal things with weight upon your conscience, and you can see things as they are.

“Which teacheth thee to profit.” There is a beauty here, it is all to profit. Why does the tradesman stand up early and late behind his counter? Why does the mechanic stick to his bench, and the labourer knock his feet against the clods? It is for profit. For who would stand behind the counter, and what labourer or mechanic would perform those things that bring toil to the mind, and fatigue to the body, except for profit? It is profit that puts the plough upon the field, and sows the grains of seed in broad furrows, profit is the great wheel that puts and keeps everything in motion.

“Which teacheth thee to profit.” No other teaching is profitable. When a person examines his books at the end of the year, and “nil” is the sum total, so a person may sit under sermons, prate and prattle about religion; but what has he got, if he has got nothing of the Lord’s teachings? He cannot say he has got anything; but if he has got that which shall save him from death and the law and take him to eternal bliss; and when he can look over the teachings

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of God, and see heaven as the balance, eternal righteousness in the kingdom of God as his enduring portion, oh! what millions are these to his account—what treasures? You may have had to walk in paths of great gloom and distress, dismay, doubt and fear; family afflictions, personal afflictions, painful bereavements, and trying temptations, may have crowded round you. But look at both sides, cast up the sum total, the creditor and the debtor side, and oh! if you can see eternal life and a kingdom of endless glory to be yours for ever at the great day! oh! what profit the Lord has given you by the teaching he has bestowed upon you! All other teaching is utterly unprofitable, it never does the soul any good; but is ever a prey to sin and Satan, and it lives under the eternal wrath of God and displeasure of the Almighty. What have I learned to profit? What have you learned to profit? If we have learned to fear God, that is profit; to believe in Jesus, that is profit; if we have had a testimony of our interest in and a blessed manifestation of dying love, and felt a sweet evidence that when He comes we shall be with Him in glory; these are things learned to profit.

IV.—But I pass on to my last point, upon which I must be brief. What sure and heavenly guidance He affords. “Which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.” Now there is a way we should go, and a way we should not go. Our evil nature is always bent on going the way we should not go, the way of the world, of sin, of self-righteousness, the way of carnality and death, that is the way we should not go; of self-indulgence, earthly delights, and sinful gratifications, in which the men of this world specially delight. This is the broad way that leads to eternal destruction, in which the multitude walk that walk toward evil, that thou shouldest not go and will not go. There is a curse in that way.

See well to it then that thy feet are in the way that thou shouldest go, and what is this way? The way of the Lord Jesus Christ, the way of faith, of hope, the way of obedience to His will and word, the way of holiness in which the redeemed alone walk, the way of truth, righteousness, and self-denial, the way of bringing forth

fruit pleasing and acceptable to God, the way in which the holy prophets walked, the way in which the martyrs, apostles, and saints of God have all travelled. Now this is a way of tribulation, temptation, and affliction, it is a straight and narrow path, but the only one that leads to life, and the Lord will lead His saints and bring them to the end of it, which is salvation to the soul; and in this they will glory; and never cease to praise the Lord, their Redeemer, Teacher, and Guide, throughout the ages of eternity.

171 The Sons of God, Their Blessings and Privileges

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Thursday Evening,

December 2, 1858

“He came unto his own and his own received him not. But as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

John 1:11-13

You may sometimes perhaps have thought in your mind that had you lived in the days when the Son of God appeared here below, you certainly would have believed in his name, at any rate you would not have been one of those who persecuted him, blasphemed him, spit upon him, and finally nailed him to the cross. Your mind revolts at the idea that you could have nailed him to the accursed tree; but if you think and say so it evidently proves that you are at present a stranger to your own heart, you know not the depths of iniquity that work there. What is there in you more than there was in the people, when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in the flesh, that should make you follow him when others turned their backs on him, believe on him when others disbelieved, receive him as your Christ when others received him not? Has some important change taken place within the last 1800 years that

you are not so sunk in sin and unbelief as those of old? The Holy Ghost is very plain upon this point; he does not open any door of escape for a self-righteous Pharisee to boast of. He declares in the most positive manner that when the Lord Jesus Christ came to his own, his own received him not, and he tells us that those that did receive him did not receive him by any power or prerogative of their own; but because they were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

In opening up these words, therefore, I shall with God’s blessing,

I.—First, shew How the Lord Jesus Christ came unto his own, and his own received him not.

II.—Secondly, That there were those who received him.

III.—Thirdly, Why these received him, when others rejected him, because they were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man; but of God.

IV.—And fourthly, What he gave to those who were enabled by grace divine to receive him, which was power or the right or privilege to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

There is in the original a distinction which our translators have not and could not well observe between the first and second clauses of the 11th verse. “He came unto his own,” in the first clause is in the neuter gender, and “his own” in the second is in the masculine; so that, “He came unto his own things or property,” and “His own persons received him not.” We have lost here the force of the original, “He came unto his own property, estate,” to “his own world,” which he had created by his own hands, and his own men and women, whom he had created by the self-same hands by which he had created the world upon which they stood, received him not. Now what should we think if a nobleman were to go to his own estate, to present himself before his own mansion, and instead of receiving him with all courtesy and all obedience, the servants were to drive him out of the property with spades and

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pitch-forks, and instead of acknowledging that he was the owner of the estate, sought his life, and nothing could satisfy them but it. Would not this fill all England with astonishment, and would it not be the theme of all the newspapers for a month? Yet when the Lord of heaven and earth descended into this lower world and visited the creatures of his hand, whose souls and bodies he had made, they, instead of receiving him as their Lord, Head and King, rejected him, blasphemed him, and finally nailed him to the cross, putting him to the most ignominious death that man's heart could have ever devised. When we look at this do we not wonder that the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ did not send his lightnings to set Jerusalem in flames? What were all the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, or all the sins of the Canaanites, to this? Yet these cities were burnt, and the Canaanites were cut off root and branch, and the command was to put them all to death. And yet so great was the long-suffering and clemency of the Almighty towards the Jews, that it was not till more than forty years after the crucifixion of our Lord that Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus, when thousands of Jews, some of whom had crucified our Lord were crucified; for Josephus tells us that so many crosses were set up around the wall, that they consumed all the wood round about Jerusalem for miles! Then he came unto his own, proved his mission by the most stupendous miracles, such as cleansing the leper, healing the paralytic, feeding thousands with a few loaves and fishes, thus carrying about with him the strongest evidence of his being the Son of God, and because he did not come as a conquering Messiah, because instead of exalting them to earthly power and dignity, he bid them repent of their sins, the Jews were provoked to malice by the innocence of his life and purity of his words, and they crucified the Lord of life and glory. But was not all this according to the design of God? Was it not all according to his purposes planned before the world was, as Peter speaks so beautifully, "Him, being delivered, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have

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crucified and slain?" He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. He came to be crucified, his mission was to be led like a lamb to the slaughter. His atoning blood could not have been shed by stoning, the Jewish mode of punishment. He was to die a death in which blood was to be shed, which took place by the nails piercing his hands and feet, and the spear piercing his side. So that though he came to his own and they received him not, turned their backs upon him, blasphemed him, and crucified him, don't let us think that God's purposes were frustrated, because men in sinning act voluntarily, not knowing the intention of God. Everything was carried out in the exact way that God had before designed.

II.—But I pass on to show that though his own people after the flesh, his own people, the Jews, not his own elect family; but his own people after the flesh received him not, yet there were those that did receive him, there was a people prepared by grace, there was a family, an elect family, whom God had in his eternal purposes chosen before the foundations of the world to call, whom he had designed to be at that time upon earth that they might receive his dear Son, that he might have witnesses, followers, and disciples who would receive him as the Christ of God and the Saviour of men. It is the same now; the mass, the bulk of mankind treat Christ, though not actually, yet virtually as the Jews did; they crucify him by their ungodly deeds, despise him actually in their hearts, as those who blasphemed him openly. But he is out of their reach above the clouds, at the right hand of God. Let us not think that human nature is changed. He might as well be crucified in Broad Street, Stamford, did the laws permit, now, as formerly he was crucified on Calvary, outside the gates of Jerusalem. But there was a people that did receive him, and they beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, they were taught of the Spirit to feel their need of him. They saw what a poor miserable world this is, they felt they were dying worms, that life was short and eternity long, and feeling the weight and power of eternal

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things, they hailed the Redeemer, the promised Messiah who might save them from the wrath to come, and the Holy Spirit was pleased to show them the glory, grace, beauty, and blessedness of the Messiah; and, thus, though he walked among them as a man like themselves, though he veiled his glory, and took upon him the form of a servant, yet, their eyes being illuminated by a divine light, and their heart touched by a divine unction, they saw the glory of God in the face of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, again, they received him in their understanding, they saw by the eye of faith that he was the Son of God, as Peter did when that blessed vision was given unto him, so that when the Lord asked his disciples what they thought of him, he answered, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God;" then the Lord told him that flesh and blood had not revealed that unto him but his Father who was in heaven. So again when Peter with the other disciples were tempted to forsake him, the Lord said, "Will ye also go away," Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go, thou art that Christ the Son of the living God." From this time they were held fast. Well, may I ask you who profess to fear the name of the great and glorious Jehovah, whether you have received Christ? You know what the Apostle said to the Colossians, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." Have ye received him into your understanding, has your mind been enlightened to see his blessedness as the God-Man? Have you seen by the eye of faith his glorious Son-ship, what he is as the Son of God? Have you seen his suffering humanity? Have you seen these two natures in the person of Immanuel God with us, and have you felt him to be so, because where the understanding is illuminated by a ray of divine light, there is a ray in the heart? Have you received him into your heart? But the Holy Ghost is ever taking of the things of Christ and revealing them unto you. Was your heart ever softened by a sweet discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ? Was he so blessed and suitable that you could have wept tears because of his sufferings, yet you were glad he did suffer, because by his stripes you are healed?

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Again, have you received him into your conscience, so that he lives, moves, and acts there, that you feel and desire to please him, and you would have your conscience more and more increasingly tender? Again, have you received him into your affections, so as to feel that you love him more than husband, wife, brother, sister, house, or land, or friends, so that there is a spiritual love in your soul of a different kind from all earthly love? Have you received him in these four ways, into your understanding, into your heart, into your conscience, and into your affections? But we pass on.

III.—To show, Why it was that they were enabled to see Christ, when others rejected him. Now you must be one or the other, you must either reject or receive Christ. How do you feel in hearing Christ set forth; for you may judge much by your feelings under the word. Do you feel an inward heaving up against the word of God, so that there is a principle of pride and resentment against the truth of God, so that you feel that nothing could make you receive it? If you don't receive the truth you reject it, and reject him who is the way, the truth, and the life. Men little think what it is to reject the truth of God, they little think of the responsibility that is incurred by sitting under the Gospel. If they reject it they are tying damnation round their necks, and if they live and die with that rejecting spirit, they will sink to rise no more. Do you feel that there is a heart in you to receive that which you hear? It is commended to your conscience, so that your whole soul seems open to receive it? You must know the difference between a mind full of unbelief, infidelity, pride, and self-righteousness, and tender, broken, contrite thoughts, open to receive God's truth. If you reject the word, you reject him who is "The Word." If you reject the truth, you reject him who is "The Truth." If you receive the word, you receive Christ, the incarnate Word. If you receive the truth, you receive him who is The Truth. People little think in this town what an awful spot they are in, in rejecting God's truth! What a hell of wrath and indignation they are pulling down upon their heads! and those who receive it little think of the heaven of

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eternal bliss which shall one day receive their souls! As those who reject the truth know little of the gulf of gloom that is to devour them, so those who receive the truth know little of the heaven of bliss that is to receive them. But how came they to receive it? They were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. The Apostle tells us here what they were not born of, and then what they were born of. They were not born of blood, that is, they did not inherit their religion, they were not religious because sprung from the blood of religious parents, because the blood of religious parents, so to speak, circulates in their veins. It is a blessed thing where godly parents have a godly seed, and there are many instances of it; but it does not always happen so. I have not had godly parents, at least before the time when God called me by his grace; for I hope my mother died in the Lord. Then you are not born of blood. Because your father was godly that does not say you are; there must be something more than having godly parents. Churches, the great mass of churches, are formed out of Sunday schools; though I don't mean to speak against Sunday schools; but against making them the nurseries of the church, and making persons believe because they go to the Sunday school, therefore they are on the road to heaven, and in this day Sunday schools are made the recruiting place of churches. We may pray for our children that God may have mercy upon them, but they will have no claim upon the grace of God because the Lord has been pleased to visit us. My children will have no claim upon the grace of God because the Lord has been pleased to visit me with it. We know that a spiritual birth is something better than this. "Nor of the will of the flesh," which is free-will, nothing more nor less, and the will of the flesh is anything but good, or godly. It has led thousands to hell, and it is leading thousands every day to that place of eternal horror, but it never led a single soul in the way to heaven. The carnal mind is enmity against God. Can it, then, lead the soul to Jesus? You know that your flesh leads towards everything evil. There is not a single sin that is not in your

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flesh; there is lust, pride, and self-righteousness, and everything in the flesh that leads from God, not to God; therefore you are well satisfied, if you are a partaker of a spiritual birth, you were not born of the will of the flesh. Have you felt the will of the flesh to be contrary to the will of God; for these are contrary the one to the other? so that if born again, you are not born of the will of the flesh. Oh, what an enemy is the flesh to grace and godliness, every breath of the flesh, every movement, every thought, and every word are all opposed to all godliness; so that if you are partakers of grace it is not according to, but exactly opposite to the flesh. "Nor of the will of man," whether good or bad; not of bad men certainly; for what bad man ever will be born again with a spiritual birth; nor of a good man; for he cannot carry his will into execution. How people are sending missionaries to all parts of the world! not that I do not like missionary societies; for I believe that much civilization has sprung from the labours of missionaries, and they may have communicated an outward form of Christianity, and God may raise up a people out of that natural Christianity; but after all the will of man never yet brought about a spiritual birth, it is a thing quite distinct from it, as distinct as God is from man or heaven is from earth. Those who receive Christ receive him, as being born of God; he implanted a divine principle, which begot them to a spiritual life. Oh! how sovereign is this, wholly in the breast of God to give it where and to whom he pleases! I may preach till my tongue cleaves to my jaw, yet all my preaching cannot communicate one breath to the soul. It is all of the Holy Spirit wherever souls are made alive. It is not my preaching or any other man's preaching, it must be God working through the preached word, and raising up the new man of grace within. Have you any reason to believe that you are born of God? You see every other birth is but a false conception, and will end in misery and shame, but a true birth is a birth of God, of which he is the soul. Can you see any mark of God's sovereignty in your soul? Have you felt so far from God by wicked works, so ignorant and self-righteous that you must be forced by the work of

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God to turn your ways from sin to righteousness, and to the fear of his great name? So far you have an evidence of being born of God. If you can recognize any traces of sovereignty, there will be an evidence of divine power with the breath of life. This is as distinct from natural religion as heaven from earth. It may be assimilated, but it never can be executed except by the sovereign power of God. If God is yours, if he has sealed you as heirs of Christ, he will never leave you nor forsake you; but will bring his work to a glorious perfection.

IV.—But I pass on to our last point, which is, He gave to them that believe on his name the power, the right, or privilege, to become the sons of God. We have a sweet explanation of receiving Christ in these words, “They believe in his name.” It is by faith we receive him. It is by the eye of faith that we see him, by the ear of faith that we hear him, and by the arms of faith that we clasp him. So it is by faith we receive him; for it is by faith that we have all those communications of the Holy Ghost to our heart, by which we receive him. To those that receive him he gives power or the right or privilege to become the sons of God. We will look first at the word “power.” We are all weakness, we cannot raise up in our heart even an evidence, or even strength to believe God gives the power; “for where the word of a king is, there is power,” and “the gospel is the power of God to salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.” When God speaks in his word, then power is given to believe, and thus to become the sons of God. There is no becoming a son of God except by the power of God. You must have a power in your soul to translate yourself from the power of the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God’s dear Son. But when you believe you receive the power, and then you become manifestly a son of God, you are then stamped as an heir of immortality, and you become manifestly one of his family. But, again let us look at the word “right” or “privilege.” What a privilege to become a son or daughter of the Lord Almighty! How proud men are of worldly rank! There is nothing so much in the world

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esteemed as rank. At Oxford there were three things admired, and they were stated in this order. First, being born of a good family; next to this was “property;” and thirdly, “being blessed with a good intellect.” Here rank and family stood first, then came riches, and then a good headpiece. If you had lived in the world as much as I, you would have seen what idols this “rank” and “party” are. But how little they know of the only true rank, the only royal blood, the only good family. To be a child of God is better than being the son of a duke or a queen. None but this rank will be with God, when time shall be no more. When dukes, marquises, bishops, and barons are in their graves, and when nothing will remain of them but a shovel-full of bones, then the sons of God will shine forth as brethren of the Lord Jesus Christ, because he is their brother, he being their elder brother, he advancing them to more than royal dignity. What a privilege in being a child of God! The world may turn its face from you, speak of you in a most contemptuous manner, and apply to you words of the greatest disgrace and contempt, through the enmity and ignorance of its carnal mind, but if you are born of God, a child of your heavenly Father, you need not mind their scorn. When you go to heaven, God will wipe off all tears from your eyes. Then you can say,

“If on my face, for thy dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If thou remember me.”

You see here what a broad line of distinction the Lord traces out between the righteous and the wicked. You must stand on one side or the other; reject Christ and receive your own condemnation, or receive Christ and manifest your interest in the heavenly crown. But there may be some here who are doubting and questioning whether they stand on this side the line or the other. They say, “I cannot say that I reject Christ, it would cut me to the heart to reject him, God forbid that I should reject Jesus, but I hardly know whether I have received him.” But your conduct will show on

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which side the line you are, your life will show it. Whose company do you prefer? Who are the excellent of the earth to you? Whom do you walk with? And with whom do you really desire to be found in life or death? If you reject Christ's servants or people, it is the same thing as rejecting Christ. On the other hand to receive Christ's servants and people is the same thing as receiving Christ. As the Lord said to his disciples, "He that receiveth you receiveth me." Lay these things to your heart, and the Lord shine upon those walking in darkness, and give them a testimony that they have received Christ, and are born of God, that they are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, and will be with him when time shall be no more.

172 The Manifestation of the Son of God

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on
Christmas Day Morning, 1858

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

1 John 3:8

The origin of evil is a problem that has ever baffled, and will doubtless always continue to baffle the keenest human intellect. But we may see a stream of which we may never view the spring. The Nile rolls down its turbid flood through the land of Egypt, but no European eye has ever yet seen its source. So it is with evil and its origin: none can see its source; all may see its stream. But there are two things connected with evil so palpable that they cannot be denied. First, its existence: to that every town, every street, every house, I may add every heart, bears infallible witness. And secondly, that God could not have been the author of it; that holy Being could not have originated it. It must arise from some source distinct from a pure and holy Jehovah. It evidently existed before this world had a being, before man was created to dwell in it, and before sin became manifest in the Adam fall. The

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mystery is, how sin could ever enter the courts of heaven. When we view for a few moments the majesty of God, and what heaven is as his own dwelling-place, where he sits in the brightness of his own effulgence, in the rays of his own eternal glory, surrounded by myriads of bright angelic beings whose every thought is obedience and love; then to conceive how sin—that hateful thing so abhorrent to the holiness of his presence—could enter into those courts of purity and bliss, and by its subtle working, could cast down from heaven's battlements into an abyss of eternal misery and horror, a numerous host of once glorious spirits, converting them, with Satan as their head, into damnable and hellish fiends: this, indeed, is a mystery which surpasses all our understanding, and baffles our keenest research.

Again: why God was pleased to permit sin to enter into this lower scene; why, when such consequences had already taken place, from its original invasion of heaven, as to sully the purity of thousands, if not millions, of angelic spirits, the Lord did not set up an effectual bar against the entrance of evil into this world also, but should suffer Satan so far to triumph as to infect man, created in God's own image, after his own likeness, with hell's infernal poison; when we attempt to penetrate into this mystery, do we not find it baffle all our mental powers? But when we have sought in vain to penetrate into this deep mystery, we feel at length obliged to come to this conclusion in our own minds, beyond which we cannot pass and in which alone we find rest, that God decreed in his own eternal mind to permit the entrance of evil into this lower world; that he did not and could not himself put his hand to such an accursed work, for that would make the pure and holy Jehovah the author of sin; but that it was consistent with his most sacred will that sin should come into the world, in order to manifest and magnify thereby his own glory. We cannot think that sin entered into the world unforeseen by the all-seeing Jehovah; that the Adam fall broke in upon him suddenly and unexpectedly, as the Holmfirth flood surprised the sleepers in their beds: that he

who sees the end from the beginning, and to whom past, present, and future are but one eternal Now, was taken at unawares, and that the Serpent glided under the leaves and amidst the flowers of Eden unwatched, undescried, by his all-discerning eye. To think so is Atheism, or making the living Jehovah a Baal, who, when the standing or falling of man was at stake, was talking, or pursuing, or on a journey, or peradventure was sleeping, and must be awaked. (1 Kings 18:27.) Nor again can we think that God would have permitted sin to enter into the world, and death by sin, unless it had been for the execution of some all-wise purpose and for the display of his own glory. Thus we are brought to see and believe these three distinct points, from which there is no escape, and beyond which there is no advance—1. that sin exists; 2, that it was the permissive will of God that it should exist; and 3, that all will be over-ruled in the end for the display of the glory of a triune God.

But if the conclusions to which I have brought you do not fully satisfy your mind, I think that you will not quarrel with the following statements: that there is such a dreadful thing in this world as sin—a fact which must be palpable to every man who has a conscience in his bosom; that this dreadful thing called sin must ever be hateful to God; that his justice, holiness, and purity, are so in diametrical opposition to it, that he is called upon to punish it; and that unless some means be found to avert this punishment, it must be executed upon every guilty head.

In all this thick darkness, how blessedly does our text shine as with a ray of light! How clearly does the Holy Ghost here, by the pen of John, tell us how this work of the devil is abrogated and abolished, and all its dreadful consequences removed, by that wondrous gift of the Son of God, which is here spoken of as his manifestation in the flesh. And I think that as we are this morning gathered together in the Lord's name—I leave the point as to celebrating or not celebrating the festival called Christmas; I waive all question as to whether the Lord was really born upon

this day or not: it is sufficient for you and me to find ourselves here this morning, and it may be, with God's help and blessing, a means of leading our minds up to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world, and the object and purpose for which that blessed Redeemer came; so that waiving all minor questions upon this point, I shall this morning confine myself to these three things, that seem to me declared in our text:—

I.—First, what are “the works of the devil?”

II.—Secondly, the manifestation of the Son of God.

III.—Thirdly, the purpose why, “the Son of God was manifested”—“that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

I.—It is evident that the works of the devil must be of great strength and magnitude, that there should be a necessity for the manifestation of the Son of God to destroy them. We do not send out an army of a hundred thousand men, with all the proportionate munitions of war, to fight with a few naked savages, who have nothing wherewith to defend themselves but bows and arrows. There is a necessary proportion betwixt the object to be overcome, and the means taken to overcome it. If, then, it were necessary for the Son of God to be manifested in the flesh “to destroy the works of the devil,” it is evident that the devil must have thrown up and fortified some most tremendous works, when nothing short of this could shatter them to shivers, and scatter their very dust to the wind. Fix, then, this point firmly in your mind, as a most important truth, that the works of the devil must be of awful magnitude, since nothing short of the coming of the Son of God in the flesh could destroy them. Men usually think very lightly of sin. The drunkard takes his cup; the swearer fills his mouth with oaths; the nightly depredator robs and plunders; the murderer attacks his victim; and, apart from these atrocious crimes, men of higher cast and character go on day after day indulging themselves in every excess of wickedness and iniquity, drinking down sin like water. What little idea they have of the magnitude of the crimes that they are committing! What little conception they possess of the holiness,

purity, and majesty of that great and glorious Being against whom they are sinning with so high a hand! For, in looking at sin, we must view the Person against whom sin is committed. If a man were to offer an insult to our Sovereign, it would be viewed in a very different light from an insult offered to a person of his own rank. There was a wretch of a man calling himself a gentleman who, some years ago, struck our Queen with a switch. How the outrage aroused the indignation of the whole country! Had he struck one of his own rank in a similar way, would that have caused such a general ebullition of feeling throughout the land? It was the dignity of the Sovereign that made the insult so atrocious. So it is the majesty of God, his purity, holiness, and infinite greatness, that make sin to be so enormous an evil; it is the dignity of the Person against whom the offence is committed, that stamps it and invests it with so awful a magnitude. We may perhaps think, in the folly and unbelief of our hearts, that there was no great crime in Adam eating an apple; we may fancy that the transgression was not so very enormous in his listening to the suggestion of his wife, or in her complying with the temptation of Satan. In fact, infidels and sceptics have ridiculed the whole transaction as what they call "an Eastern myth," that is, a fable of the same character as the gods of Homer, or the traditions of our Saxon ancestors; and even men who profess to believe the Bible is an inspired book, have indulged in many unbelieving and erroneous views about the fall of man. They do not see that Adam in a state of innocence stood as our federal head; that he was not, as we are, prone to sin by nature, but though able to fall, was free to stand; that as he was able, so he was bound by every consideration to keep the positive and express command that God had given him not to touch the forbidden fruit; and that by wilfully and deliberately breaking it, he as it were struck a blow against the very majesty of heaven, insulted his Maker to his face, and did a deed that God most justly abhorred as being committed with such signal aggravation. At this gate entered sin and death. "By one man sin entered into

the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, in that all have sinned." (Rom. 5:12) This, then, was the great work of the devil, the masterpiece of Satan, to deface the image of God in which man was created; to separate the creature from the Creator; to introduce into the very heart of man that infernal poison which filled his own veins; to enlarge the domain of evil; to triumph over God by turning this beautiful earth into a second hell; and to glut his fiendish hate by involving man in the same hopeless misery into which he himself had been cast. It was therefore not only an act of the most damnable treachery on the part of Satan the tempter, but it was an act also of the greatest sin on the part of the tempted. Adam deliberately refused to listen to God, and gave ear to Satan. He wilfully trampled upon the solemn command of God, and preferred the counsel of Satan to the authority of his Creator and Benefactor.

Again: one might think, as many have not only thought but said, that the entrance of sin into the world by the fall of Adam could not have affected the whole human race, or entailed the same penalty on all his future offspring. It may be asked, how could one sin thoroughly destroy the image of God in which Adam was created, and carry death both into body and soul? But do we not see an almost similar effect naturally in the case of certain poisons of great potency and malignity? There is a poison unhappily too well known by the name of strychnine, so powerful that one grain will destroy human life with the most agonising convulsions. A drop of poison from a venomous snake, such as you can hardly see upon the point of a needle, will course through every artery and vein in a man's body, and speedily turn it into a mass of putrefaction. If, then, poison, whether vegetable or animal, of so small a magnitude, possess such destructive power over the juices of the body, can we not see how the poison of sin may act in an analogous way upon the soul, and turn, so to speak, all its once wholesome juices into a mass of loathsome corruption? But whether the figure apply or not, it is most certain, from the unerring word of truth, that the

one sin of Adam ruined his own nature throughout. He was duly forewarned by the mouth of God—"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." That sentence took place. Though Adam's natural life was prolonged for more than nine hundred years after this, yet mortality and disease, at the very instant of the fall invaded his frame, and from that moment he began to die; and not only so, but death without a moment's delay took place in his soul: he became dead in trespasses and sins on the very spot where he fell, and in falling lost the image of God in which he had been created.

Now we, as Adam's descendants, are daily and hourly feeling the consequences of his fall. He sinned not alone; he fell not as a single solitary individual, for the whole human race was in his loins and fell with him. The word of truth declares, that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that [margin, "in whom"] all have sinned. By the offence of one, [or "by one offence," margin], judgment came upon all men to condemnation." (Rom. 5:12, 18.) Adam, we read, "begat a son in his own image, after his own likeness." (Gen. 5:3.) Indeed, how could he beget any other? All beget after their kind; and a sinner begets a sinner as naturally and necessarily as a beast of prey begets a beast of prey, or a vulture begets a vulture. It may seem hard that we should suffer for Adam's sin; but do we not daily see similar instances of the transmission of a sad inheritance? How many a child is at this very moment feeling the consequences of its parent's transgression! How many little things are born into this world just to struggle through a few years of misery, entirely in consequence of their parents' profligacy or debauchery! How scrofula, consumption, insanity all run in the blood and taint generation after generation! We may say how hard it is for little children to suffer for their father's sins or inherit their mother's maladies. It is hard, and it has wrung thousands of parents' hearts, to see many a fair daughter pine away like a lily, many a gallant son droop and die under consumption's deadly stroke, because the

mother or the father carried its taint in their bosom. It is grievous to see children swept into poverty through a gambling father; or a mother's sin taint the child with a life-long disgrace. Before then you complain of, or quarrel with the consequences of the fall, see whether you can adjust these minor matters; and if you admit the present transmission of disease and suffering from parent to child, look higher, and see whether sin may not be transmitted as well as sorrow. You cannot but see that sin exists;—that it has filled the world with misery—has polluted this beautiful earth—and rules and reigns from shore to shore. Whence came this deadly plague, under which thousands and tens of thousands perish under the wrath of God? From the fall, that work of the devil; that is the fountain head. But look at the stream as well as at the fountain. Wherever you see sin, you see a work of the devil. For Satan does not cease to work. He was not satisfied with introducing sin in the first instance into the world, and thus ruining Adam and all his future race. One would have thought he might have stopped there, and not pressed on his conquest. One would have supposed, did we not know how that proud and fallen spirit is filled with the direst malice and enmity against God and man, that he would then have stayed his slaughtering hand. But nothing stops him. Though he knows that it will but eventually aggravate his own misery, he will still go on seducing and deceiving man, until he is shut up for ever in the bowels of that hell which God has prepared for him, and into which he and all his reprobate angels will be cast, with all the nations that know not God. Why does a dog worry a whole fold? Is not one lamb enough to appease hunger? Why night after night wound and tear what he cannot eat? The mad thirst for blood that boils in his veins hurries him blindly on, till the stake or the gun finish his career. So with Satan. He was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44), and he will be a murderer to the end. Wherever mischief is to be done, there he is. As in Eastern climes, directly a carcass falls the vultures are seen hovering in the sky and congregating from all quarters to prey upon it; so wherever there is

the scent of crime upon the gale, there Satan and his infernal agents are. Has this vulture never seen from afar the risings of sin in the heart? Who knotted the halter for Ahitophel, put the sword into the hand of Saul, and tied the noose round the neck of Judas? Who filled David's heart with lust, and planned the death of Uriah? Who enticed Absalom into rebellion and incest, and then hung him up in the oak as a mark for the darts of Joab? Who tempted David to number Israel, and turned Solomon, the wisest of men, into a poor old, foolish, idolatrous dotard? One answer suffices. The same foul spirit who is continually stirring every sin of the human heart, kindling every evil passion, working upon every lust, and stimulating every vicious, ungodly desire. It is hard, I fully admit, for us to distinguish, especially when blinded by temptation, between the workings of our fallen nature in itself and the agency of Satan upon it. The sea sometimes heaves and rolls with what is called a ground swell when there is not a breath of air in the sky; at other times the winds distinctly agitate its bosom and raise up the stormy waves. So sometimes the heart heaves and swells without any direct Satanic influence; at others he evidently makes it cast up mire and dirt. But he is worst when least seen. Judas, when the thought first entered his mind to betray his Master, did not see that Satan prompted the desire. Covetousness, enmity against the Lord, jealousy of Peter and John, the secret infidelity of his heart, weariness of the restraints of religion, fear of persecution, and other mixed motives—for men are not usually led into crime by one temptation—might have been the strings that drew him toward his horrid deed, but Satan pulled the last cord that plunged him in. The devil, we read, put it into his heart (John 13:2), but was there no seed-bed ready for the hellish suggestion to root in? Thus, though Satan "put it into his heart," Judas saw not his hand; though the very inspiration of hell, it so mingled itself with his own breath after money and revenge, that he could not distinguish one from the other. Though not like him abandoned to Satan, it may still be hard for us to distinguish at all times between the workings of

our corrupt nature and the influence of the Prince of darkness, I doubt not we can sometimes do so. But we may depend upon it, that where sin is present, Satan is not far absent. Wherever there is anything to be done to disbelieve or disobey, to bring reproach upon the cause of God and truth, to distress the mind of others, to grieve one's own conscience, cripple one's own usefulness, injure one's own character, and, but for grace, eternally ruin our soul, we may be sure that Satan or some of his agents are not a great way off. Were our eyes miraculously opened to perceive the true state of the case, it might be that we should see ourselves, when under the influence of temptation, surrounded with these infernal fiends, in the very contrary sense, and with a very different prospect from that which was displayed to view when the Lord opened the eyes of Elisha's servant, and he saw the mountain surrounded with horses and chariots of fire to protect his master.

But Satan's main seat is the unregenerate heart. Here he has erected his strong citadel, and from this, as from the centre, he is continually prompting every wicked desire, suggesting or fostering every ungodly thought, and stimulating the first incipient movement of sin, until it breaks forth into open action.

We see it more particularly in the world without, as it comes sometimes under our observation. When men are alone, sin is plotting in their heart; when they get together, they put it into execution. Can any crowd of men be assembled without sin being inflamed by the concourse? The more that men are gathered together, the more sin acts by mutual contact. As in a conflagration, the larger the risk the greater the flame: as in a gunpowder magazine, the more materials the greater the explosion. A mob will do what an individual durst not; and many a youth has been plunged into grievous crime, as one of a company, who would have shuddered to commit it alone.

We see "the works of the devil" also in the Church of God. What divisions—what animosities—what unkind thoughts—and what harsh, cutting expressions are continually manifesting

themselves even among those who profess to be the disciples of Jesus! How rarely we find two or three of God's people who can walk together even comfortably, without jarring and without strife! How few churches are there in which there is not some root of bitterness—in which the members are knit together in the close bands of brotherly affection and love!

How few families are there (to take another view of the case) in which there is even common harmony—in which there is decent affection—in which husbands and wives, or brothers and sisters, are walking together in a spirit of mutual concord and peace. O could the veil spread over many houses be rudely torn off, how many bickering husbands, fretful wives, jealous sisters, quarrelsome brothers, and families making each other mutually wretched should we see! Smiles abroad, frowns at home; kindness for company, sullenness for the fireside. Is not this the work of the devil, especially when a profession of religion is thrown as a cloak over the whole?

And when we come closer still—to our own bosom, how continually we find Satan at work there! What infidelity, at times, can he stir up in our carnal mind! What wicked desires, or if not so far as that, what wicked thoughts can he infuse into our breast in our most sacred and solemn moments! Upon our bended knees before the throne of grace; in a place of worship when hearing the word of truth; in conversation with the saints of God; even at the very ordinances of God's House, who can shut out thoughts of the most intrusive character, to use no stronger language to describe them? A man who watches his own heart will see how Satan is ever at work, continually suggesting or fostering matter of evil, applying the torch to the train that seems already laid to his hands, and as such ever ready to explode! Surely, a man can see little of the evil of sin, can know little of the workings of it in his own mind, who cannot, from personal and painful experience, set to his seal that this is true. We have so clear a view sometimes of Satan's infusing or fostering vile thoughts, that we start back

with horror, and almost if not actually cry aloud against him, as we should do if we caught a thief in our house.

O, the works of the devil! How they stand before us as so many heaps of ruin. How he has marred this beautiful earth, and filled it with lamentations and woe! O the thousands and millions, by his plots and his instrumentality, consigned to eternal misery! O the grievous sorrows of mind, the intolerable anguish of body, whereby thousands are at this moment racked and tortured! O the distress of conscience, the guilt, bondage, and fear with which many of God's saints are now exercised! O the wide-spread havoc which has made the world a very Aceldama—a field of blood, not of gory bodies, but of bleeding hearts! What destruction thou hast wrought, thou enemy of God and man!

But what a rich and unspeakable mercy it is that there is some means of escape from them—that these works of the devil have not eluded the wisdom of God, nor are beyond the reach of his omnipotent arm. Infinite wisdom that foresaw the ruin, combined with infinite love and mercy to devise and execute a way to break them down. However formidable, however extensive; however to human skill and power impregnable, a means has been found in the counsels of heaven “to destroy the works of the devil.” And this leads us to our second point:—

II.—The manifestation of the Son of God. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested.” Could nothing else but this suffice? Could no other way be found? Was it absolutely needful that the Son of God should be manifested to destroy these works? What a view this gives us, if we can see it by the eye of faith, what these works are, when nothing short of the manifestation of the Son of God could destroy them! Have you a son? Do you know what the feelings of a father towards a child are? We must bear in mind that the Son of God is to the Father what a son of ours is to us, though in a way of which we can form no conception, as being so infinitely beyond all the thoughts of the human heart. Still, as we find in the Scripture mention made of the fatherly love that the Father bears

to the Son, and of the filial love that the Son bears to the Father, we believe what we cannot understand, and feel what we cannot reach. Ever bear in mind that Jesus Christ is God's co-equal, co-eternal Son, not by office, but by nature; that his very essence, his very mode of subsistence from all eternity, is to be the only begotten Son, and that any other view but this strikes a fatal blow at the Trinity itself; for if he be not the eternal Son of God, and as such of the very essence of the Father, there is neither a Trinity of persons nor a unity of essence. Hold then by the eternal Sonship of Christ as your very life, lest you deny the Son, and so have not the Father. (1 John 2:23.) Amidst every storm may this be our sure anchorage—"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:68, 69.)

Now, it was the eternal purpose of God to manifest his dear Son. But how could he be manifested? Can God be seen? Is he not invisible, "dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto?" We can no more see the Son of God in his eternal Deity than we can see God the Father himself; for "no man can see God and live." Therefore, that he might be manifested, he took a nature in which he could be seen; and that nature was a nature like our own; for "as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Thus was accomplished the manifestation of the Son of God. But he was still the Son of God. He never laid aside his Deity or Sonship: he could not do so without ceasing to exist. He ever was what he ever had been; he ever is what he ever must be—the eternal Son of God. But to be manifested, brought to light, made known, revealed; to be seen, touched, handled, embraced, and realized, it was needful for him to assume a nature that could be touched, handled, realized, and looked upon. As John speaks in the beginning of this epistle—"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; for the life

was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness." In order, then, that the Son of God might be manifested, he took our nature into union with his own eternal Deity, and thus God and man were united in one glorious person as God-Man, Immanuel, God with us.

He was manifested, in the first instance, as a babe, born at Bethlehem and laid in a manger, for there was no room for him at the inn. He was born of a pure virgin, for he was not conceived by natural generation as we are. Had it been so, his human nature must have been involved in all the consequences of the first transgression: it must have been stained and tainted with original sin as ours is; for wherever there is natural conception, there must be sin attending it. "In sin hath my mother conceived me." But being conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, under the supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost, the blessed Lord assumed of the flesh of the Virgin a nature in all points identical with ours; yet preserved in the very moment of its conception from all speck or spot of sin. When that babe was born at Bethlehem; when he was presented to the eyes of the wise men from the East; when the shepherds looked upon him as he lay in his mother's lap, there was the Son of God manifested. O, the mystery, that the Son of God, he who fills all heaven with his glory—by whom the world was created and by whom it stands—the great, glorious, and eternal Jehovah, for such he is—then dwelt in that holy babe lying in infantile weakness upon the lap of the Virgin Mary! That babe grew up as ours grow; for he "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." He grew to be a man, and there is reason to believe that he worked with his reputed father at his mechanical employment; for we find it said of him, "Is not this the carpenter?" (Mark 6:3.) When he was about thirty years of age his ministry more immediately commenced. But all the time during which he was manifested, he was bearing sin: for he was the sin-bearing Lamb of God from the moment of his conception up to his expiring breath upon the cross. He was born to be "a man of

sorrows and acquainted with grief," not only in the garden and upon the tree, but as being from the very first designed as a lamb for the slaughter. It is not only when laid upon the altar that the sacrifice begins. When the victim is taken; when it is led to the altar; when its limbs are bound; when the stroke is being waited for; when the knife is sharpening; when fear and trembling make every muscle quiver; when the sharp blade pierces the throat and the hot blood gushes forth—all are but parts of one and the same sacrifice. So with regard to the sufferings and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. We must not limit them to the garden and the cross. Was his not continually a life of suffering? The inward experience of the Lord as the sin-bearer is but dimly shadowed forth in the gospels. It is in the Psalms, more especially Psalms 22, 40, 69, 102, that you will find the suffering experience of Jesus. The cross has but the consummation, the last act and suffering, the final sacrifice and bloodshedding of the holy Victim. But long before that, grief and sorrow were the cup of Jesus. Your conscience sometimes may be grieved by seeing the sin practised in the world. When the Lord has blessed you, or favoured you with some sweet and solemn moments of communion with himself, how grievous to you is the conversation of the wicked! Your righteous soul is grieved, as was Lot's in Sodom, with sins in which you take no part, such as profane language or loose conduct in a railway carriage, or scoffing speeches from members of your own family. Now look at the Lord Jesus Christ, and see how his pure and holy heart was pained and grieved by seeing the sin that ran down the streets like water. The world is often a wilderness to us. What must it have been to him who for ever lay in his Father's bosom as his only-begotten Son! To be out of heaven was misery; to bear sin was hell. The very hardness of heart of his own disciples; the weakness of their faith; their striving for the mastery among themselves—has not that all too a cause of suffering to the Son of God? To have Judas the traitor ever before his eyes to show that he was fostering, so to speak, a hypocrite in his bosom; to see him

putting his hand into the same dish; walking with him as a disciple; listening, with seemingly devout attention, to his words; preaching and performing miracles in his name, and wearing the mask of the most devoted discipleship, when his black heart was full of infernal wickedness—was not that a source of grief to the Lord Jesus? We look at his sorrowing agony, his groans and tears, in the garden we see, by the eye of faith, his sufferings on the cross; we view his holy feet and hands pierced with nails, a crown of thorns upon his head, and intense bodily anguish stamped upon his languid eyes and marred visage. But when we have seen this, have we seen all the baptism of blood and all the cup given him by the Father? Was not his holy soul tortured far beyond the tortured body, when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

But O what an object of faith, as such, for those poor, guilty, self-condemned sinners who have had a long and painful experience of the works of the devil! For their sakes he was manifested on the cross—held up before their eyes as a bleeding sacrifice that they might look and live. But there is another manifestation which they need, and at times enjoy: when he manifests himself to their souls, and by his blood and love destroys inwardly and experimentally those works of the devil which they so deeply feel within. For there it is that the battle is fought and the victory won; it is there that the strong man is disarmed by a stronger than he; it is there that the triumphs of the cross are made known, and the mighty conqueror becomes seated on the throne of the affections.

And this leads us to our third point.

III.—Why the Son of God was manifested—"that he might destroy the works of the devil." We have been considering those works; we have said how mighty they are; but language would fail to describe their magnitude, extent, and effect. One thing only can convince us of their nature and magnitude—that the Son of God alone could destroy them. What then must sin be if nothing but the manifestation of the Son of God could destroy it? You have thought perhaps that a few tears, confessions, expressions

of sorrow, desires of amendment, various attempts to alter the course of your life, were sufficient to do away with the sins into which you have fallen. If such have been your thoughts, you have been bold enough to think that the works of the devil might be destroyed by a few falling tears, a few mumbled prayers, a few acts of almsgiving, and a little extra attention to the duties of religion. But of course if this be all that is needful for you, it is all that is needful for others. Now, just see what this comes to—that a few religious duties are all that is necessary to destroy the works of the devil. The works of the devil to be destroyed by duties! You might as well send a number of school children with straws in their hands to beat down the walls of Delhi, or attack Sebastopol with pop guns, as to attempt to overthrow the works of the devil with a few tears, or a few promises of amendment, or a few half-crowns or shillings dropped with a grudging hand into a charity plate. Why need God have sent his own Son to destroy the works of the devil if tears could have blotted them out? Shed tears over the walls of Delhi. Would all the tears of Cawnpore, or all the sighs and groans of that night of anguish, when our fair countrywomen fell one by one under the butcher's knife, dissolve those walls and melt them as the snow before the sun? Make a few resolutions to take the city; give a few shillings or half-crowns as a charity dole to the widows and orphans of the soldiers; repeat a few prayers; bind vows and promises about your neck. Will that drive out the rebels? So Satan is not to be foiled by a few hypocritical resolutions or a few crocodile tears. He has not set up his fortifications in the heart of man—he has not manned the works with all the artillery of hell to be vanquished by an arm of flesh. Sticks and straws will never batter down even the outworks, the practice of sin; much less the citadel, its love and dominion. Only one thing can do both: the manifestation of the Son of God.

I have already opened up this as accomplished in the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. But this is not enough. It must be manifested to our souls. It is not sufficient for personal, individual

salvation, that he was manifested in the flesh. It has been so manifested. Are all men saved thereby? Who is really benefited by his sufferings and sorrows in the garden and upon the cross? Are all men benefited thereby? Is a general gaol delivery proclaimed? and do all men in consequence of it enter the courts of Heaven? Surely not. "The wicked are still turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Only those, then, who believe in the Son of God—only those to whom he is manifested as the power and wisdom of God—only those who receive him by faith and love into their heart—are benefited by his death and resurrection; for only as he is spiritually and personally manifested to the soul does he destroy the works of the devil. Where are the works of the devil? In your heart. What must come to destroy them? Power into your heart. Unless you get something into your heart which is stronger than the works of the devil there, how are those works to be destroyed? Look how sin has ruined your soul—how it has brought you under the wrath of God. See how you have been entangled in sin. Look at the long catalogue of crimes which you have committed—if not in deed, in word or thought—since you lay in your mother's lap. Think only of the sins of a single day: what carnality, what unbelief, what pride, what covetousness, what selfishness! But I need not go through the catalogue. I could not stand up to read, nor could you sit to hear, article by article, the contents of that long dark scroll. The human heart is too deep an abyss of sin to be laid bare to open view. It is like the common sewer: it is best covered up by a culvert. There is stench enough at the mouth, without penetrating through the whole length of its hideous contents. What does conscience say? Does that not testify that there is sin in your heart, and that sin is the work of the devil? Let your life be circumspect and your character without a blot, still is not sin there? If then this work of the devil is to be destroyed, you must have that come into your heart which has sufficient power to destroy it; and I am very sure that nothing short of the manifestation of the Son of God in the very place and spot—the citadel itself and stronghold of sin—can

effect this. His blood applied to the conscience can alone take away its guilt. His grace received into the soul can alone deliver from its power. His love shed abroad in the heart can alone overcome its love; and his truth vitally known can alone liberate from its practice. He must be manifested to be known, revealed to be seen, and felt to be enjoyed.

And this not only in the first manifestation of the Son of God—in the first reception of mercy—in the first proclaiming of salvation through his blood, when the great works are broken up, and ignorance, unbelief, enmity, and self-righteousness are laid low by the mighty conqueror. Satan, that crafty engineer, is ever seeking to cast up fresh intrenchments. As soon as one is demolished, he builds up another, and often in a corner little suspected, till they seem to have become almost as strong as before. Then there must come a fresh manifestation to destroy them. Fresh backslidings want fresh healing; new sins require new forgiveness; and the breaking out of old inveterate lusts, like the rising up of so many gaunt spectres from the dead, needs a fresh power to lay them in the grave. Sin in us is not a dead thing, which, once killed by a view of Christ, lies a corpse for ever after in the recesses of the human heart. It has a million lives; in fact, it never dies, until death separates body and soul. It therefore revives again and again with fresh energy. Pride this day may seem overcome and buried: it rises with new strength to-morrow. Infidelity may seem to have received this hour a mortal blow by some manifestation of the Son of God: it springs up the next, like a phoenix from its ashes; with redoubled strength. Unbelief may seem to be so thoroughly slain by a view of Jesus that the soul many fondly dream it will never be tempted to doubt again: the next day many witness it rising up with greater power than ever. Old lusts may seem to be dead and buried: opportunity comes, temptation is presented, the object that once allured allures again; the lust rises out of its grave, like a giant refreshed with wine, and seems as though it fought against your soul's salvation and sanctification with greater vigour than

ever. There is not a sin in the human heart that is killed outright at regeneration. The old man is crucified, but dies hard: and sometimes it appears as if not a single nail were driven through either his foot or his hand. Sin will ever struggle for the mastery: it will live as long as we live. Therefore we are always needing the manifestation of the Son of God to destroy these works of the devil. He has done it virtually already in the cross, for he has led captivity captive. His is a finished work; and he can and will destroy them in the heart wherever he comes with power.

But there will be no thorough destruction of sin within until the body drops into the grave, and the soul mounts aloft to be with the Lord: nor a full destruction of its effects in the body until the resurrection morn, when the body shall be raised from the sleeping dust and changed into the glorious image of the body of the Son of God, meet companion for the immortal soul. Then will the victory be complete; then will Christ appear, shining forth with the lustre of a million suns; then will be the glorious manifestation of the Son of God, and the works of the devil thoroughly destroyed. The burden of heaven's anthem, the grand theme of eternal adoration, will be the manifestation of the Son of God to destroy the works of the devil. The redeemed will look down from the battlements of heaven and see what works have been executed by the devil: they will see millions of fellow-beings consigned to eternal misery, weltering in hell, whilst they view themselves safe in the arms of eternal love. They will see the Son of God, without a veil between, manifested to their eyes in such heart-ravishing glory as the three disciples had but a feeble, dim view of on the Mount of Transfiguration. It will be their joy to see him as he is. He will always wear his human nature; he will never lay that aside. That will always shine resplendent with all the glory of Godhead: that will be the object of eternal admiration and love: and to that glory of the God-Man all the saints in bliss will be for ever looking and for ever adoring, for sin will no longer have a being in them, but they will be conformed to the glorified image of the Son of God,

and be celebrating for ever the grand triumph of the cross.

It may be that some of you who are toiling and grovelling here below feel more of the works of the devil than the power whereby those works are overcome. You may be even now groaning under the power of sin and the temptations of Satan, and yet be looking up with a believing eye to the Son of God as your only help and hope. Look on. He can save to the uttermost. He is able to send down messages of peace and pardon to your soul. He is able to deliver you. Thousands and tens of thousands have been in your case.

“Once they were mourning here below,
And wet their couch with tears.”

The Lord appeared for them, and now they are singing his praise. And this is ours also, if the Lord enable us to look beyond the works of the devil to him who came to destroy them—to hang with all our strength and hope upon the Son of God, believing that he is able to save, and to save to the uttermost; for his own words are—“Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else.”

173 A Merciful and Sympathising High Priest

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning,
April 17, 1859

“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”

Hebrews 2:17, 18

We have in the book of Genesis a brief, but a very beautiful account of the sacred intercourse which subsisted between God and man in the garden of Eden, when man stood before his

Maker in all the purity and uprightness of his native innocence. Sin and death had not yet invaded Paradise; and thus without any infringement of his dignity or glory God could, as he was wont, come down to commune with man in the cool of the day when all nature was hushed in calm. Being then without sin or shame, unconscious of evil and of its inseparable companion, guilty fear, man held with his Maker the sweetest intercourse which a finite creature could enjoy with his Creator. The foundation of this intercourse was, however, not so much man's native innocence as that God had created him “in his own image, after his likeness.” This likeness to God consisted mainly in four things:—First, in the immortality of man's soul; for we read, that though God formed man's body out of the dust of the earth, he “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” Thus whilst his body was earthy, for “the first man was of the earth, earthy” (1 Cor. 15:47), his soul was heavenly—breathed into him from the very mouth of God, and thus immortal. The immortality of man's soul is thus a reflex image of the everlasting existence of God. Secondly, as created in God's moral image, which is righteousness and truth, purity and love. Thirdly, as created in what I may perhaps call God's intellectual image; that is, made capable of thought, reason, memory, reflection, and discourse. And fourthly, as created in what I may term God's anticipated or future image, for as the Son of God was in due time to assume a perfect human body and a perfect human soul, the body and soul which Adam wore were a representation beforehand of the nature which the Lord Jesus Christ should afterwards assume into union with his own divine Person.

When God then had thus created man in his own image, after his likeness, he placed him in Paradise, in a garden which he had planted with his own hand for man's recreation and delight. There he caused every tree that was pleasant to the sight to spring up, and every tree that was good for food; so that man could look round and not only see himself the object of God's bounty, but

could enjoy everything which his nature was capable of as adapted to that state of innocency and happiness. The beautiful trees and shrubs of that fair Paradise gladdened his eyes; the murmuring river charmed his ears; the cool shade refreshed his spirits; the sweet fruits delighted his palate and nourished his frame; and, above all, intercourse with God enlarged, expanded, and fed his soul. But, alas! how soon a dark and gloomy cloud, fraught with destruction and death, came over this beauteous scene! How soon, by the permission indeed of God, but through the craft and malice of Satan, sin invaded this Paradise—this garden of God! And what was the consequence? I need not take up your time and attention this morning by enlarging upon the fall and its dreadful consequences. I will name but two, which became at once and immediately manifest—guilt and shame. Man no longer came forth as before to meet his God. He shrank from his sacred, and now for the first time terrible, presence. He knew that he had wilfully and deliberately, not deceived as the woman, but with his eyes open (1 Tim. 2:14), broken and trampled upon the express prohibition of God. He therefore sought to hide himself, with his guilty partner, amidst the trees of the garden. But could the trees, however dense, hide him from the heart-searching eye of God? Could the leafy foliage give him shelter from the hand that had made, and could now with equal ease destroy him? Ah, no. He was called forth, and he came full of shame, guilt, and confusion into the presence of his justly offended Judge to hear his expected sentence of death. That, however, in a moral sense had already taken place and could not be reversed; for “God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent.” He had said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” And thus he had already morally died. But though he spared his forfeited natural life, yet to show his righteous wrath he cursed the very ground for his sake, declaring that “in sorrow he should eat of it all the days of his life,” and should return unto that dust out of which he had been originally taken. Still with the curse he gave a

blessing, for then and there, in the very garden where man sinned and fell, the Lord bestowed upon the woman that gracious promise which contained, as it were, in its bosom the germ of all future promises concerning the Messiah—that “the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.” By this promise, full of truth and grace, God revealed to the Church that most blessed truth, that his own Son should in due time come into the world, assume of the seed of the woman, the flesh and blood of the children, in order that he might die, and by dying destroy “him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,” who by his subtlety had brought in such a flood of sin and woe; and not only so, but save thereby an innumerable multitude of sinners then in the loins of Adam. But, besides this promise, the gracious Lord instituted at the same time the rite of sacrifice, as a standing type of the atonement which in due time was to be made by the Son of his love; for we read that “he made coats of skins” and clothed therewith our first parents, which no doubt were the skins of the sacrifices then offered by Adam, and a representation of that imputed righteousness clothed in which alone they could stand without spot or blemish in his sight. In consequence then of, and ever since the fall, man has never been able to stand before God except through a mediator. Sin thoroughly and effectually broke off that intercourse of which I have spoken as existing between God and man in the days of his native innocency; and now man can no longer approach his Maker, at least with any hope of acceptance, any true faith, or any holy confidence, except through the mediator of God’s own choice and appointment. Thus we see the necessity that there should be a high priest over the house of God, who in the days of his flesh offered for sin an availing sacrifice, and now lives at God’s right hand, not only to intercede for the heirs of promise, but to make his love, blood, and grace experimentally and effectually known to their hearts.

Those thoughts may serve as an introduction to the subject before us, where we have mention made of the priesthood of our

Lord Jesus Christ, and the benefits and blessings which spring out of it. The text contains a deep mine of heavenly truth, which at the best I can but imperfectly handle; but, looking up to the Lord for his help and blessing, I shall—

I.—First, endeavour to bring before you the nature and necessity of the great High Priest over the house of God.

II.—Secondly, how God the Father chose and qualified the Son of his love to undertake this important work, and to become this great and glorious High Priest.

III.—Thirdly, what are the four qualifications of which our text speaks. The first is, “to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” The second, to be a “faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.” The third, to be “merciful.” And the fourth, to be sympathising—“for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”

I.—If there were no sin we may safely assume there would be no need of a sacrifice, or of a high priest to offer it. The very circumstance that what the apostle calls “the blood of bulls and of goats” was necessary under the law was in itself a standing representation of the necessity of a sacrifice being offered for sin. But the rite of sacrifice was only a representation, deriving all its value from God’s appointment; for as the apostle argues, “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” But its object was to teach the ancient church by daily and visible sign and figure that no sinner, as a sinner, can approach unto God except through atoning blood. Nor can any one now draw near unto him who, in his purity, justice, and holiness, is a consuming fire, except through a Mediator; for the Lord himself has said “No man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6); and the Holy Ghost expressly declares that “there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” (1 Tim. 2:5.) Now it is absolutely necessary that this Mediator should be such a one as can effectually and acceptably mediate between the two opposing parties. He must therefore possess in himself sufficient dignity,

worth, and glory in the eyes of God to stand near and commune face to face with him; and yet he must partake of the nature of those for whom he mediates that he may have a fellow-feeling with them. As Job beautifully speaks, he must be a daysman that can lay his hand upon them both. But where can such a one be discovered? If God had looked round (so to speak) the courts of heaven, to see whom he could find adequate to sustain this mighty office, where could he be found? What created being, however highly exalted, what holy angel, what burning seraph, in a word, who amongst the hierarchy of heaven could have ventured to approach unto God, to intercede for man’s guilty race, or to mediate between the justice of God and their deserved doom? Who among the morning stars that had sung together, or of all the sons of God who had shouted for joy when the foundations of the earth were laid (Job. 38:7), could offer to bear up a sinking world, when, by the shock of the fall, “all the foundations of the earth were out of course?” Surely only he, who, when “the earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved” can say, “I bear up the pillars of it.” (Psal. 75:3); surely none but the Son of God had sufficient dignity, weight, power, or influence to come forward to undertake so mighty a task. For what created being, however pure, high, or holy, could approach the Majesty of heaven, to offer an obedience available for others, when God could claim from him as a creature the whole? None, none but the Son of God. God’s co-equal, co-eternal Son, his “fellow,” as he calls him by the mouth of the prophet, could stand forward with sufficient dignity and glory to empower him to undertake such an office as to mediate between God and men. Let this then be fixed as a firm foundation of our most holy faith, that it is the eternal possession of this divine nature as the Son that qualified the Lord Jesus to mediate between God and us. If this foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do? We must never, therefore, let it go, for it is our very life. Being his only begotten Son, and therefore of the same glory and power, he can as equal with the Father stand up in our name before him, when the angels must

veil their faces. In his hands the glory of the Father is safe. All the perfections of Godhead shine forth in him, who is the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his Person, and these, therefore, can suffer no tarnish or diminution in or by him. And as loved by the Father with an everlasting love, he is able to plead with him as one who loves God and as one whom God loves. The Deity and Sonship, therefore, of our great and glorious high priest are essential to his sustaining such a character as the Mediator between God and men; for you know that mediation is an essential feature of the priestly office, as Aaron showed when he took a censor at the command of Moses, and ran into the midst of the congregation, and offered incense for the people. Take away the Deity and Sonship of our great high priest, and you blot the Sun of righteousness out of the sky. The light of the church is gone and darkness covers the scene—that darkness which is the earnest and forerunner of the blackness of darkness for ever.

But again: he must be of the same nature as those for whom he mediates. The apostle speaks very blessedly on this point in the chapter before us:—"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." And again:—"For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Had he died for angels, he must have taken angelic nature. As he died for men, he must take human nature. This is the sum of the apostle's argument, and most conclusive it is. Thus by virtue of his essential deity and Sonship, he was able to mediate with God; and as taking our nature into union with his own divine Person, he was able to mediate with man. Being as his eternal, only-begotten Son, "in the form of God, he thought it not robbery," that is, an unhallowed, an unallowed claim, "to be equal with God" (Phil. 2:6); and by taking upon him the form of a servant and "being made in the likeness of men," he became man's friend and man's brother. The words of our text are very expressive upon this point:—"In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren." He was made in all things like unto

his brethren; and yet in many things he was very unlike them. The apostle, therefore, does not say he was made as his brethren, but like unto them, as he speaks elsewhere of his being "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3); and yet we know that it was not sinful flesh, for if his flesh had been sinful he could not have been "a lamb without blemish and without spot." Likeness is not the same thing as identity. A person may be like me, and yet not be altogether as I. Here, then, lies the main difference between him and us as regards his humanity, that the Lord Jesus Christ did not assume a fallen, but an unfallen nature. There was in that pure flesh which he assumed in the womb of the Virgin not only no sin, but no liability to, no possibility of it; there was in it no mortality, no sickness; no seeds of disease or death. It was the nature of Adam before he fell—not the nature of Adam after the fall; and yet differing from the nature of Adam in this, that it could not fall as Adam did, not being a person like him, but taken as "a holy thing" into union with the person of the Son of God at the very instant of its conception under the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. Our blessed Lord never was in Adam; for had he been, he must have fallen with him, and been a partaker with the whole human race in his guilt and crime. Thus the apostle makes a distinction between Adam and the Lord Jesus; the distinction being that Adam was our natural, federal head, but the Lord Jesus Christ our new Covenant Head. Therefore he says—"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all," that is, all the elect of God, "be made alive." And again, "The first man Adam was made a living soul; and the last man Adam was made a quickening spirit." And to show us more clearly still the difference between the two covenant heads, he adds, "Howbeit that was not first, which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterwards that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven." (1 Cor. 15:22, 45, 47.) Here the Lord Jesus Christ, as our new covenant head, is set in opposition to Adam, our natural, federal head, Adam being, at the very best, in his first creation, but "a living soul," the Lord Jesus, as the divine

giver of spiritual and eternal life, “a quickening spirit;” Adam being earthy, as formed out of the dust of the earth, and the Lord being heavenly, not only as coming down thence, but as assuming a nature which was of heavenly birth and origin, as produced not by natural generation but by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus though the blessed Lord was “in all things made like unto his brethren,” yet he took into union with his own divine Person, not a fallen, frail, and peccable human nature, such as is theirs, but a nature pure and unfallen; and though conceived in the womb of a sinful woman and made of her flesh, yet as being produced, by the supernatural operation of the Holy Ghost, of her substance, it was formed and brought forth without the least taint of sin, sickness, or mortality. And yet, with this exception, “in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren.” He had a body like theirs; he had a soul like theirs; a body of flesh and bones and blood; a soul that could reason and think and feel; believe, hope, and love; suffer and rejoice; be sorrowful even unto death; be grieved for the hardness of men’s hearts; and have compassion for the weariness and faintness of a famishing multitude. In partaking, then, of the nature of the children, he partook of all its sinless infirmities. Do they hunger? So he hungered, as in the wilderness and at the barren fig tree (Matt. 4:2; 21:18, 19.) Do they thirst? So he thirsted, when on the cross he cried aloud, “I thirst.” (John 19:28.) Do they suffer weariness? So did he, as at Samaria’s well. Do they sleep? So did he, for he was “asleep on a pillow” when the ship was in danger from the waves. At the grave of Lazarus he “groaned in the spirit, was troubled, and wept;” before he opened the deaf man’s ears, “he looked up to heaven and sighed;” and in the garden he prayed, and agonized, and sweat great drops of blood. Thus, in all their sorrows and sufferings, he was made like unto his brethren; and we may well suppose that his holy body and soul, not being like ours blunted and hardened by the fall, not only felt more keenly the sufferings of our common humanity, but were pained more readily by them, and suffered more exquisitely from them.

What heart can conceive or tongue express the infinite depths of the Redeemer’s condescension in thus being made like unto his brethren—that the Son of God should assume a finite nature, subject to the sinless infirmities necessarily connected with a time state and a dwelling on earth; that he should leave the bosom of his Father in which he had lain before all worlds, and should consent to become a denizen of this world of tears; to breathe earthly air; to eat human food; to associate with human beings; to be an eye-witness of, and himself share in human sorrows; to have before his eyes the daily spectacle of human sins; to be banished so long from his native home; to endure hunger, weariness, and thirst; to be subject to the persecution of men, the flight of all his disciples, and the treachery of one among them whose hand had been with him on the table; not to hide his face from shame and spitting, but to be mocked, struck, buffeted, and scourged, and at last to die an agonising death between two malefactors, amid scorn and infamy, and covered, as men thought, with everlasting confusion and disgrace! O, what infinite condescension and mercy are displayed in these sufferings and sorrows of an incarnate God! The Lord give us faith to look to him as suffering them for our sake!

II.—But I pass on to show how God chose and qualified him for the work which, according to the eternal purpose and counsel of the three-one Jehovah, he undertook to perform. He did not assume this office himself unchosen, uncovenanted, unqualified, for “no man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be a high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee.” (Heb. 5:4, 5.) He was chosen from all eternity for this special work. We therefore read—“Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.” (Isaiah 43:1.) He is the “living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious.” (1 Pet. 2:4.) And why did God choose him for the work but because he was so eminently qualified to sustain it? there being no other in heaven or earth, who was in a position

to undertake the work, or who had power to carry it through. For not only his eternal Deity, but his being made like unto his brethren, adapted him in every way to be such a high priest as they needed. A bleeding sacrifice had to be offered. God as God could not do this. The divine nature is not susceptible of suffering. Deity cannot bleed or die. And yet atonement must be made. The demands of justice must be paid. The law could not be broken with impunity. The perfections of God jarred, and needed to be reconciled; so that, though God, as God, could not suffer, bleed, die, or offer sacrifice, yet it was needful that one who was God should do all this. A sacrifice that an angel might offer would not be meritorious, would possess in it no efficacy for the work of atonement. Angelic shoulders could not bear the crushing weight of imputed sin. If they rendered to God a pure and holy obedience, it was what he could claim justly at their hands. If a seraph burned before the throne of God in flames of seraphic love, it was no more than he could demand as having created him a burning seraph. If the highest angel flew upon his swiftest pinions to obey God's commands—be it to smite the host of Sennacherib, or convey Lazarus to Abraham's bosom—he would be doing that which God could justly require at his hands. He had no super-vacuous obedience to offer; there was no meritorious task of which he could say to God "This I do over and above what I am required to do. Accept this at my hands for guilty man, and impute it to him for righteousness." The highest angel could not use such language before the throne of the Most High. But the eternal Son of God could use such language. Therefore God the Father chose him for the work in his own eternal mind, and prepared for him a body in and by which he could execute it: as we read—"A body hast thou prepared me." (Heb. 10:5.) By this body we are to understand the whole of his pure humanity, for the expression takes in not only his body but his soul, which, we know, had a large part in the work of redemption; for we read, not only of the precious blood which his body shed, but of his seeing "of the travail of his soul."

(Isai. 53:11.) When, then, the blessed Lord had been chosen of his Father to do this important work he gladly and willingly accepted the office. His heart burned with love to the children of men; for even in eternity, when he was by his Father "as one brought up with him, and was daily his delight rejoicing always before him;" even then "he rejoiced in the habitable part of his earth; and his delights were with the sons of men." (Prov. 8:30, 31.) His bride, the Church, was then presented to him by his heavenly Father, and he betrothed her for ever to himself; yea "he betrothed her in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies." (Hosea 2:19.) So that she became his Hephzi-bah, for his delight was in her. (Isa. 62:4.) And his heart shrank not from the task, nor from the suffering however great. He cheerfully consented to accept the task, to finish the work which the Father gave him to do; and though he could only do it by sacrificing himself, yet so full was his heart of love and pity, that he said to his heavenly Father, "Lo, I come to do thy will; thy law is in my heart." Thus Deity and humanity, love to God and love to man, zeal for God's glory and pity and compassion for the wants and woes of the objects to be redeemed, with strength to suffer and power to save, all met and met alone in the person of Immanuel; and thus was he qualified to be such a High Priest as could glorify God, and rescue his people from the depths of the fall.

III.—But let us now consider the four important particulars, by which the Lord Jesus Christ was so eminently and specially qualified, to be the great high priest over the house of God.

1. The first qualification which I named was to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. We can form little idea in our minds of what sin is as viewed by the eyes of an infinitely pure and holy God. There may be times and seasons in our breasts when our conscience is made tender in God's fear, and sin lies hard and heavy as a burden which we can scarcely bear. At such seasons we may have some feeble, faint conception of what sin is as viewed by the eyes of infinite purity. If ever, too, we have seen by faith the

darling Son of God groaning and agonizing in Gethsemane, or suffering and bleeding upon the cross, we may have felt with grieved heart and weeping eyes what sin must be to cause him such sorrows. But these are with most believers but few and favoured moments. For the most part, we breathe such an atmosphere of sin that we scarcely feel the evil that surrounds us without or dwells with us within. In this we are like a person who has spent the night in a small and confined bedroom: he is not aware whilst he is in it of the closeness of the apartment; but let him go forth in the summer's early morn into the pure and clear air, and then return to his apartment of which the window has been kept down, how sensible is he at once of its close atmosphere, and he wonders how he could have slept and risen without perceiving it. So we naturally breathe such an atmosphere of sin, that we have, as it were, become insensible to it. I have understood that persons who are afflicted with fever, smallpox, and other diseases most offensive to all who attend them, are themselves almost insensible to the noisome smell of the room in which they lie, and of which they are themselves the cause; so man, eaten up by the cancer of sin, fevered with every raging lust, covered with the loathsome leprosy of evil breaking forth in every part, though a monster in the sight of a holy God, is insensible to his own filth and noisomeness; it being the very nature of man to deceive himself, and not see sin as God sees it. But when light from above enters into our mind, and life with light, and we begin to see and feel what sin is as committed against a God so pure and bright and holy—what an awful thing it is to have broken his law as we have done again and again; what a terrible curse is entailed on those who do break it; what an opening hell awaits those who die without pardon and reconciliation to a justly offended God: then we begin feebly and faintly to have some conception of what sin is in the eyes of a holy and pure Jehovah. Before we feel this, we cannot enter into the nature and necessity of a high priest like Jesus Christ; we cannot understand why it should have been necessary for the

Son of God to come down to earth to bleed and to die. We think that sin might surely have been wiped off at a cheaper rate; that tears and prayers, and alms-deeds, and repentance, and sacraments, and good works of various kinds, surely might have been put into the opposite scale. We cannot and do not naturally think that sin is so evil a thing as God declares it is. We are like Lord Nelson, who said almost in his dying moments, "I have not been a great sinner, Hardy;" though he had forsaken his own wife and lived in adultery for years. I have named it with reluctance, and merely to show how sin so blinds the mind and sears the conscience, that a brave, noble-hearted man, the idol of his country, may live in open infringement of the laws of God and man, and yet lull himself in a dying hour with the thought that he has not been so great a sinner as many others. But when God comes near to judgment he searches the heart, tries the reins, lays guilt upon the conscience as a load grievous to be borne, pierces and wounds the soul with the stings of guilt and remorse, that he may thus bring it down to his feet to cry for mercy. It is cutting, killing work, but love and grace are wrapped up in it; for when the soul is ready to sink under the intolerable load of sin, then is the usual time that faith is given to view the bleeding God-Man as revealed to the heart by the power of God. By this teaching we experimentally learn, how needful it was that Godhead should have been united to manhood in the Person of Christ, for we see and feel that nothing short of blood divine can wash away sins of so deep a dye, of so aggravated a stamp, of so black a hue, as we feel ours to be. No man can have a light view of sin who has seen it either as reflected in a holy law, or in the sufferings of Immanuel, God with us. When then we have been feelingly exercised with a sight and sense of our dreadful sins against a holy and just God, and I may add, against the sufferings and sorrows of his incarnate Son, we begin to see a little into the meaning of the words, "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people," that is, to atone for them. And yet, with all our exercises, guilt, or distress, we really learn but little of what sin is, as God sees

it. But whether we learn little or much, it is a lesson which we must be taught in our own bosom. It is indeed a lesson that is passed over by many who stand high in a profession of religion; but it is one that must be learnt sooner or later by every saved soul. A man never becomes a scholar—I mean a true scholar in the school of Christ—if he passes over the rudiments. He is in grace, what some persons are in nature: they have never learnt the elements of the language or science which they profess to know; they have been imperfectly taught; they passed over the rudiments through idleness or bad teaching, and were pushed on into a higher class before they had mastered the first principles; and therefore during all the rest of their lives they never know any one language or any one science truly and perfectly. Or, to use another figure, they resemble a building reared upon a sandy soil, which has no firm or solid foundation, because that which should have been rock is but sand. Thus, if a man is not well grounded in the beginning of religion, he cannot be expected to have a middle or an end of any worth or value. It is a great thing then to begin right. It is a great thing to have a good, solid, and deep foundation laid in the heart and conscience by the hand of God at the first setting out. As the Lord himself says, “It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.” (Lam. 3:27.) It is a good thing for God to begin with us before we begin with God; for God to give us religion before we profess it; for God to take us in hand before we take the truth of God in hand; and for the Lord to work by his own grace in our heart before we speak of that grace, or take that great and holy name into our lips. But when we are exercised by the hand of God bringing us to the light, and thus by seeing light in his light, come to learn, at least in some measure, what sin really and truly is, our eyes get opened, which before were closed, to see also the necessity and nature of a priesthood like that of Jesus, “to make reconciliation for the sins of the people;” for we feel these two things, that we ourselves as sinners need to be reconciled to God, and that this reconciliation can only be made by one who is able to effect it.

Have you then ever seen an angry God; ever felt his wrath in your conscience; ever trembled at the judgment to come, and feared what your dreadful doom will certainly be, unless he be pleased to have mercy in a sovereign and most undeserved way upon your soul? It is impossible to say how many veils are taken off the heart, how many false refuges are hurled to the ground, and how much self-deception and self-righteousness are broken up by a discovery of sin to a guilty conscience and by some manifestation of a sin-avenging God. This the Lord speaks of by his prophet as done by himself. “Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet.” He lays it and not we; for if we laid it, we should hold the line wrong, and tamper with the plummet. And what is the consequence of his laying it, or rather what next follows? “And the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place.” (Isaiah 28:17.) As, then, the refuge of lies is swept away and the hiding-place overflowed, we feel a need of a truer refuge and of a safer hiding-place. And when our eyes are graciously opened to see that a reconciliation has been already made by the blood of the Lamb, we desire to have a manifested interest in that precious blood. We see with believing eyes that atoning blood has been shed, a sacrifice offered, an obedience rendered, and that through this a guilty sinner may be freely pardoned, accepted, and saved. But still our life may hang in doubt. We may believe that there is a Saviour, without believing that he is our Saviour. We may see the atoning blood at a distance, without having it sprinkled upon our heart; we may hear of pardon without enjoying it; may read of salvation without experiencing it; may view the sympathy and compassion and love of Jesus, and yet be strangers to them all in joyful experience. But in every quickened soul there is a yearning for reconciliation to God. He cannot bear to live at enmity with him. He has been an enemy of God long enough. Sufficient has been the time he has spent in things that God abhors. He desires to be experimentally reconciled, pardoned, and accepted, and to feel that God is his Father and his friend. Now

Jesus has “made reconciliation for the sins of the people” that are thus taught and exercised; but only as this reconciliation comes into their conscience are they feelingly and experimentally reconciled to God. For bear in mind, that reconciliation in scripture has two aspects: there is a reconciliation of our persons, and a reconciliation of our hearts and consciences. The apostle says, “We pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” (2 Cor. 5:20.) He does not there speak as if their persons had not been already reconciled by the blood of the atonement; nor as if they were enemies, who needed to be brought near by the blood of the Lamb; but he desires that they, in their own soul, by receiving the atonement, by experiencing the pardoning love of God, by knowing the blood of sprinkling for themselves, might be inwardly and spiritually reconciled to God by receiving the sentence of justification in their own hearts. A man may view the atoning sacrifice at a distance, but this is not enough; it must be brought near. He may see the atoning blood as an Egyptian might see the blood of the Paschal lamb sprinkled upon the lintel and side-posts of the children of Israel; but it was upon the door of the true Israelite. The Holy Ghost must apply it for us and to us, and when we know the blood of sprinkling savingly by his application of it, we not only know that the Lord Jesus Christ has “made reconciliation for the sins of the people,” but has also personally reconciled us unto God.

2. But a second qualification named in our text is faithfulness; that he should be a “faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.” Faithfulness, we know, is an indispensable requisite to the right discharge of every undertaken office. It is required in stewards, we read, “that a man be found faithful.” (1 Cor. 4:2.) If, for instance, you are a man of property or business, and employ any person either himself to do or to overlook others in doing what requires care or skill, you naturally expect him to be faithful in what he undertakes. He requires indeed a certain degree of intelligence and skill to know what he is about, and to superintend others;

but you require not merely ability, but faithfulness, uprightness, honesty, and integrity of heart and hand; and this not by fits and starts, but unwavering and undeviating. So God required not only one who was able and willing to become his servant to do the work appointed, but one who would be faithful in the execution of it. Jesus is that faithful one, according to the ancient promise, “I will raise me up a faithful priest that shall do according to that which is in my heart and in my mind.” (1 Sam. 2:35.) “Righteousness was to be the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins” (Isai. 11:5;) and thus he was faithful to him that appointed him; not merely as Moses as a servant in the house, but as a Son over his our house. (Heb. 3:2, 6,) O the faithfulness of Jesus! How implicitly can we rely upon it. How can he be otherwise than faithful? Is he not the true God? Has he not in himself all the perfections of Godhead? And are not truth and faithfulness among the glorious perfections, not only of his divine, but of his human nature? Faithfulness to his Father as his only begotten Son; faithfulness to his covenant engagements; faithfulness to his assumed office as the Father’s servant; faithfulness to the Bride whom he had betrothed to himself; faithfulness to every promise, rite, type, sacrifice, and prophecy which foreshadowed him; faithfulness unbending to every temptation, unbroken by any violence; how needful, how indispensable, and yet how great and glorious is this faithfulness of our great High Priest! Knowing this faithfulness, God entrusted to him his own glory. He committed not only the care of the Church, with the salvation of all the elect, into his sacred hands; but he entrusted him with what was dearer to him and nearer still—his own glory. Therefore, Jesus could say at the end of his mission, “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4); which was not only to save the Church, but to glorify the Father by his obedience unto death. God gave the persons of the elect into the hands of his dear Son, as Jacob committed Benjamin into the hands of Judah; and as Judah accepted Benjamin, so Christ accepted the Church and undertook

to bring it unto God, or he himself would bear the blame for ever. But how this faithfulness was tried! Men tried it; devils tried it; God tried it; but it came gloriously through all. Yet what loads were laid upon it! How the very knees of Jesus, so to speak, staggered beneath it! How, as Hart says, he had

“Strength enough and none to spare?”

How he had to sustain the curse of the law and the load of imputed sin! How he had to drink up a very hell of inward torment! How he had to be agonised in body and more than agonised in soul! What bloody sweat in the garden, what tears, what sore amazement, what heaviness of spirit, what sorrowfulness even unto death; what pangs of body upon the cross, what grief of mind, what distress of soul, did the holy Lamb endure in being faithful unto God! How he might have prayed, and his Father would have sent him twelve legions of angels! He had but to speak, and he might have soared to heaven and left the cross and all its shame and suffering behind. But he was faithful to God and to the work which he had undertaken. Six weary hours he hung upon the cross. Six weary hours he endured the wrath of God, and that most cutting stroke of all, reserved to the last as the bitterest drop in the whole cup, the hiding of his Father’s countenance, which wrung from his bosom that cry such as neither earth nor heaven had heard before—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” And yet not until he had finished the work did he give up the ghost. So he was faithful “in all things pertaining to God.” And he is faithful, too, in all things pertaining to man. He could say to the Father, “Of all which thou hast given me”—save the son of perdition, Judas: he had no charge to save him from death and hell; but of all the others of whom he had received as his Father’s gift, he could say “I have lost none.” Thus he was faithful while he was on earth. And how faithful he is now! The High Priest under the law had two offices to execute: he had to offer sacrifice for the people, and to offer prayer and intercession for them. Upon earth Jesus fulfilled the first; in heaven he fulfils the second, as there

3. But he is a merciful high priest, which is the third qualification the apostle mentions. And how suitable this is for us! We want a high priest, not merely one who offered a sacrifice upon the cross; not merely one who died and rose again; but one who now lives at the right hand of God on our behalf; and one of that tender, merciful, and compassionate heart with whom we can carry on from time to time sacred intercourse; whom we can view with believing eyes as suitable to our case, and compassionating our wants and woes; in whom we can hope with expecting hearts, as one who will not turn away from us; and whom we can love, not only for his intrinsic beauty and blessedness, but as full of pity towards us. If I may use the expression, we want not a dead but a living, not an absent but a present, not a once but a now Jesus; we want a friend at the right hand of God at the present moment; an omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and yet pitiful and loving Mediator between God and us; an interceding High Priest, Surety, and Representative in our nature in the courts of heaven, who can show mercy and compassion to us now upon earth;

“Whose heart is touched with tenderness,
Whose bowels melt with love.”

Our wants make us feel this. Our sins and sorrows give us perpetual errands to the throne. This vale of tears is ever before our eyes, and thorns and briars are perpetually springing up in it that rend and tear our flesh. We want a real friend. Have you not sometimes tossed to and fro upon your weary couch, and almost cried aloud, “O that I had a friend!” You may have received cruel blows from one whom you regarded as a real friend: but you have been cruelly deceived. You feel now you have no one to take care of you or love you, and whom you can love again; and your heart sighs for a friend who shall be a friend indeed. The widow, the orphan, the friendless, the deserted one, all keenly and deeply feel this. But if grace has touched your heart, you feel that though all men forsake you, there is the friend of sinners, a brother born for

adversity, a friend who loveth at all times, who will never leave or forsake you. And how it cheers the troubled mind and supports the weary spirit to feel that there is a friend to whom we may go; whose eyes are ever open to see; whose ears are ever unclosed to hear; whose heart is ever touched with a feeling of pity and compassion towards us. But we want this friend to be almighty, for no other can suit our case: he must be a divine friend. For who but God can see us wherever we are? What but a divine eye can read our thoughts? What but a divine ear can hear our petitions? And what but a divine hand can stretch itself forth and deliver? Thus the Deity of Christ is no dry, barren speculation, no mere Bible truth, but an experience wrought powerfully into a believer's inmost soul. Happy soul! happy season! when you can say with the Church, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, ye daughters of Jerusalem." (Song 5:16.) Thus the very wants of the soul instinctively teach us that a friend, to be a friend, must be a heavenly friend; that his heart and hand must be divine, or they are not the heart and hand for us. This friend, whose bitterest reproach on earth that he "was the friend of sinners," is his highest glory in heaven, is the blessed Jesus, our great high priest in the courts above. We find him at times to be very merciful, very pitiful, and very compassionate. And I am sure that we need all the compassion of his loving breast; for we are continually in states of mind when nothing but his pure mercy can suit, when nothing but his rich and boundless compassion is adapted to our case.

4. But there is one more qualification in our great high priest, the fourth and last remaining to be noticed; which is,—sympathy. This is opened up very sweetly in the last verse of our text:—"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." You are tempted, are you not? Is not sin ever at work in your carnal mind? Are not snares every day spread in your path? Can you leave your home for the business of the day without finding traps and gins at every step to entangle your feet? Can you eat, drink, or sleep; speak or keep

silence; read, or think, or pray; be at home or abroad, in the church or in the world, without meeting some temptation to evil? Does not the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life start up at every corner, and present continual occasions of temptation? Who can deliver you out of temptation; the guilt produced by it; the sorrow it occasions; the shame, confusion, darkness, and bondage which it creates? Surely, none but the friend of sinners, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. He alone is able to succour them that are tempted. But you want one who can sympathise as well as succour. We often are in states when we want sympathy. But who can sympathise with us in trouble but those who are or have been in similar trouble? The rich cannot sympathise with the poor; the healthy with the sick; the strong with the weak; the Pharisee with the publican; those who are at ease in Zion with the mourners in Zion. We must have been or now be in certain spots in soul experience, before we can sympathise with those who are in them now. So the blessed Jesus is able not only to succour, but to sympathise with them that are tempted. But what makes him able? Not merely his ability as God, but his having suffered as man; for we read in our text, "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted," where his ability is connected with his own suffering and is said to spring out of it. It is then his having been man as well as God; his having experienced temptation in his own person; his having been assaulted by sin and Satan. Though neither sin nor Satan had any place in him, yet he knew all the temptations to which we are subject by personal experience; and his having suffered under and from them renders him able to sympathise with those that are so tempted. You are tempted to doubt God, the word and truth of God, or your own sonship. Were not these temptations brought before the mind of our sympathising high priest, when the tempter came to him and said—"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread?" Nor was he tempted to doubt his Sonship only, but to doubt God's providence, and that he might be

left in the desert to die of hunger. And have you not been tempted to doubt God's providence too? How he was tempted to doubt God's protecting hand, when he was invited to cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple! How he was tempted to turn aside from the path of suffering and sorrow to enjoy all the glory of the kingdoms of this world; and toward the close of his suffering life how, doubtless, he was tempted by the desertion of his friends and the withdrawing of the light of his Father's countenance, to doubt God's compassion and pity, when he left him, so to speak, in the hands of his enemies! Every temptation you are subject to the dear Redeemer experienced in his own person, for "in all points he was tempted like as we are." Therefore he is able to sympathise with you in and under all, for he suffered in and under them. Now how encouraging this is to those who not only know what temptation is, but who suffer acutely from it, that our blessed high priest "suffered, being tempted." Temptation was not to him like the sea dashing against a rock, which repels it without feeling it. Jesus repelled it, and was no more polluted by it than the rock by the waves of the sea beating over it; but he felt it, though he repelled it. It grieved his holy soul; it pained his righteous spirit; it was so contrary to every sacred feeling of his pure breast, that though his heart did not give way in the slightest degree to the temptation presented to it, yet it was a cause of painful and poignant suffering. As Lot, in a much lower sense, did not partake in the abomination of Sodom, yet they vexed his righteous soul day by day as he saw them; so the holy soul of Jesus was grieved by the temptation in which he took no share, and which could not stain or defile his sacred spirit.

As taught then and blessed by the Holy Spirit, we see these four glorious qualifications meeting in our great high priest: first, we see him making reconciliation for the sins of the people, putting away their iniquities by the sacrifice of himself. We see him, secondly, faithful to God, and therefore not only to have executed the work with which he was charged, but to have finished it in

a way whereby every perfection of God was glorified, and every attribute harmonised. Thirdly we see him merciful, so as to have compassion upon poor sinners, who, without that mercy being revealed, cannot live or die; and, fourthly, we see him sympathising, so as to pity as well as succour them that are tempted. Need I say how encouraging all this is to every saint who feels his need of this compassionate, faithful high priest? Need I urge any other motive to embolden us to present our wants before him, that from time to time we may receive his love, and blood, and grace into our heart, and live more and more to his praise, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is worthy of it all for time and for eternity?

174 A Peculiar People

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning,

June 24, 1860

"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Titus 2:14

There is a common, and, if true, a very serious objection brought against the distinguishing truths of the gospel—what are commonly called the doctrines of grace; which is, that they naturally and necessarily lead to licentiousness; and that for this reason it is exceedingly dangerous to believe or profess them, and of course, by implication, more dangerous still to preach them. If this objection be well founded, under what an awful responsibility must I lie! for I have believed, professed, and preached these very doctrines for more than thirty years. If, then, these doctrines which I have preached for so long a period naturally and necessarily lead to licentiousness, and are therefore imperilling men's immortal souls, what have I been doing all these years but poisoning the very springs of life? and, as my sermons and writings have obtained a

considerable circulation, I have been sending abroad far and wide what can only issue in the ruin of my hearers and readers, and as far as I am personally concerned, to my own disgrace here, and my own destruction hereafter? The Chinese are said to poison the wells at which our troops are likely to drink. But what is their crime compared with mine if they but destroy men's bodies, and I by poisoning the wells of truth destroy men's souls? We must either, then, meet and overthrow this objection, or fall under it and admit it to be true. If we admit it to be true, we must at once give up these doctrines; for all are agreed that a holy God cannot have revealed unholy doctrines; all must acknowledge that no view or sentiment, creed or confession, came from God which naturally and necessarily leads to sin. So that if the objection be true and well sustained that our views and sentiments, our doctrines or experience lead to sin, and by necessary consequence cannot have been revealed in the inspired Scriptures, our best, and indeed our only safe or honest course will be, as soon as possible, to confess our sin and forsake it; to cast these doctrines which I have preached and you believed so many years to the winds, and publicly acknowledge before the church and the world your sin in ever having believed them, and I especially mine in having for so many years taught and preached them. But through mercy, the objection cannot be sustained; and we will endeavour, with God's blessing, to show that it must fall to the ground if viewed with an enlightened eye and weighed in a spiritual balance.

But the first question to be decided is, Are those doctrines in the word of God, or are they not? Are they, as some assert, doctrines of man's invention, mere perversions of a few isolated passages, or strained interpretations of some metaphorical expressions, contrary to the grand tenor and general drift of the Scriptures, or has the Holy Spirit written them there as with a ray of light, so that he that runs may read them, if he run as those that run for eternal life, if he read them as those read whose eyes are anointed with an unction from above? I believe he has written them so plainly

and clearly that the veriest babe in grace may, under the teaching of the blessed Spirit, see them shining as with a heavenly glory through the whole Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Thus, if the doctrines of grace be plainly revealed in the word of God,—and none can deny this who have seen them there written, and felt their power in their heart,—the objection does not fall upon us who believe them or upon me who preach them, but upon God himself who has revealed them. Therefore, objector, answer it to God; it is against God you are fighting—against God you are spitting forth the venom of your enmity. The slaver may reach us, but it is the enmity of your mind against these truths themselves that prompts you to give it vent.

But these doctrines may be abused, and not only may be, but frequently are so. Ungodly men may adopt them as a creed, or even as a mask and a cover for all manner of sin and hypocrisy. This is one way whereby Satan often seeks to bring them into reproach. When, then, men plainly see that some who profess these doctrines lead very inconsistent lives, instead of attributing the sins which they so plainly observe to the man's own corruption and hypocrisy, they cast the charge of ungodliness upon the doctrines themselves. But this, though common, is very unfair reasoning. The abuse of a thing is no argument against its use. Is not health abused by many to the gratification of their own base lusts? Is not strength abused to deeds of violence? Is not money abused to pride and licentiousness? Is not food abused to gluttony? Is not wine abused to drunkenness? But are not these good in themselves, though man abuses them? Nay, has God given man any good gifts in providence which may not be and are not daily abused? So the doctrines of grace may be and are abused. But because ungodly men may make an ungodly use of that which is in itself pure and holy, that is no objection against the doctrines themselves. I will go a step further and say that there is no holiness without them; that not only do they not lead to licentiousness, but they so lead and are so indispensable to holiness that there can be no real holiness

independent of them.

But not to detain you longer upon this introduction to our subject, what says our text in reference to this point? Has that no voice which speaks in favour of my assertion? Does that bear no testimony to their truth? What are the express words of the Holy Ghost by the pen of Paul in the passage before its? Speaking of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, he declares that he “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Who, then, can say that Christ gave himself for us that we might live in iniquity, when he came to redeem us from it? Who can say that we should not be zealous of good works, when he came to purify unto himself a peculiar people who should be zealous of them? But these things will be more apparent if the Lord enable me to open up the words as I seem in some measure to see a light upon them.

I.—First, the gift of our Saviour Jesus Christ, “who gave himself for us.”

II.—Secondly, the object for which he gave himself, “that he might redeem us from all iniquity.”

III.—Thirdly, the effect of an experimental knowledge of that redemption, that he thereby purifies unto himself “a peculiar people.”

IV.—Fourthly, the mark and character of that peculiar people thus purified, that they are “zealous of good works.”

I.—Admire with me how the Holy Spirit, by the pen of Paul, here traces the whole work of redemption and the whole work of purification up to the gift of our Saviour Jesus Christ. And do observe what a blessed fulness there is in the expression, he “gave himself for us.” May we not with all holy reverence lift our eyes up to heaven and look at our most blessed Lord as he stood up in the councils of eternity, and there view by living faith how freely he gave himself for us before the foundation of the world, that in due time he might do the work that the Holy Ghost in our text has declared he came to do? He is thus beautifully represented

(Prov. 8) under the name of “Wisdom” as “daily his Father’s delight, rejoicing always before him;” and with a prospect of his future work upon earth, as even then “rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth and his delights with the sons of men.” But this was “before the mountains were settled; while as yet he had not made the earth nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world.” (Prov. 8:25, 20, 30, 31.) We read, therefore, that God “chose us in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4); and the gracious Lord says to the sheep on his right hand, “come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matt. 25:34.) But in viewing these eternal transactions of love and grace, we should at the same time take a glance at what the Church of God was before the Adam-fall. We must view her not as fallen but as unfallen, not as involved in sin and ruin, but as a pure and spotless bride given by the Father to his dear Son to be his spouse. Of this Eve was a type, who was brought and given to Adam in all her spotless innocence; married to him before, not after the fall. Thus the Lord himself pleads with the Father in that blessed prayer which he offered up shortly before his crucifixion:—“I have manifested thy name unto the men which then gavest me out of the world; thine they were and thou gavest them me;” and again, “I pray not for the world but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.” (John 17:6, 10, 11.) That this gift is not to be restricted to the Lord’s immediate disciples is plain from his own words afterwards, where he prays for the whole body of his people in similar terms:—“Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with the where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou has given me.” (John 17:24.) The Lord tells his heavenly Father that those whom God had given him were first his own. “Thine they were.” They were his by creating design, as foreshadowed in the eternal mind before they had birth or being; his as chosen in Christ, their covenant head; his as presented by him unto the Son of his love, to be his

spouse, his bride, his inheritance, in whom he should be eternally glorified. As such, then, the mind and will of the Son being one with the Father and the Holy Ghost, he received the church as God's special and peculiar gift. The affections of his heart flowed forth towards her, and she became his in so special a way that he could say of every member of his mystical body, "All mine are thine and thine are mine;" and again, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." (John 17:23.)

But this bride and spouse of Christ, though thus betrothed to him and made one with him by eternal ties, fell in the Adam-fall from this primeval purity, and of which Eve in her native creation was but an imperfect figure. She thus lost all her original beauty and innocence, and sank at once into the depths of sin, misery, and woe; for the whole of the church being in the loins of Adam, sinned in and with Adam, and was dragged down with and by him into that pit of ruin into which his feet sank. This may seem hard doctrine; but how else can you explain the sin and misery which there is in the world? Does not the apostle say, "By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men for that [or as we read in the margin "in whom"] all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12); and does he not say, "In Adam all die?" (1 Cor. 15:22.) Then if death passed upon all men through Adam's sin, and all die in him, must not the church have sinned in Adam and died in Adam? But how was she to be brought out of this horrible pit of sin and death, misery and wretchedness, into which she had so awfully fallen? How again was she to be a spotless spouse and fitting bride for the Lord the Lamb? How could she show her face in the courts of heaven after this transgression? How could she appear before the bright and holy angels as the glorious bride of the Son of God, when she had sunk into such depths of sin and death, been covered with all the filth of the Adam-fall, and become polluted to the inmost core by being a participator in his guilt and transgression? For let us not think there is any such thing as a half-way fall, as a little fall. The fall of Adam was to the lowest

depth, not indeed of actual crime, but of ruined human nature, for in it he lost the image of God, became the slave of Satan, and dead in trespasses and sins. There was but one way, and that way, when made known to the soul, fills it with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And that way, when it will be made fully manifest at the great day as the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose, will display both to the ransomed millions and the bright angelic hosts such depths of infinite wisdom, grace, and love as will fill heaven itself with holy and eternal amazement. This wondrous way of wisdom and love was that the Son of God should freely give himself out of his Father's bosom, in which he had lain from all eternity, and take our nature into union with his own divine Person, by assuming the flesh and blood of the children. But in so doing, it involved the necessity that he should give himself freely unto all the sufferings and sorrows which were required by infinite justice to work out a sufficient and perfect obedience; that he should therefore endure the penalty the Church had incurred, and by standing in her place as her Surety and Representative might do what she never could have done and bear what she never could have borne. It was in this way, and in this way alone, that he could reconcile her to God; that washed in his blood, clothed in his righteousness, and sanctified by his Spirit, she might once more lift up her head without external spot or inward blemish, free from sin without and within, in the courts of heavenly bliss.

II.—But we pass on now to show the object for which Jesus gave himself, that he might redeem her from all iniquity. Could there have been any other way of her redemption but this, we cannot but suppose that God would have discovered and accomplished it. If it had been possible for the church of God to have been redeemed from all iniquity by any other price than the sufferings and bloodshedding of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can hardly for a moment think that God would have given up the Son of his love—not "spared" him, as the apostle speaks. We may, I think, then, lay it down for a certain truth were any other plan feasible, such a plan

would have been designed and accomplished. And, conversely, as no other plan was adopted, and no other way revealed but the giving of Christ for us, that in the mind of God this was the only way whereby we could be redeemed from all iniquity.

But let us look for a few moments at the word redemption: it is a word of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures, and conveys a meaning of blessed import. It has indeed various significations in the word of truth, but all implying that the person redeemed is sunk into a certain lost and miserable condition; and the central idea round which all the other ideas group themselves is “one made captive in battle.” You are aware how in ancient times devastating armies over-ran different lands, the object being not merely plunder, but to carry off captives; and as these captives were not put to death but were made slaves, a state of captivity is the leading idea, and that of servitude springs out of it. Take this idea into spiritual things. Thus it was Sin that devastated Paradise: Sin was the mighty conqueror that broke into the garden of Eden and carried Adam and Eve captive. And when sin had taken our first parents captive, it dragged them into slavery; made them slaves to do the foulest work, and employed them on the basest errands. A slave has no will of his own. His master’s will is his will. Whatever work his master bids him do he must do it. He cannot, as a hired servant, leave his master for a better employer or higher wages. He is a slave for life, ground down with an iron yoke and unable to deliver himself—a slave till death, or till he is in some way set free. So were we not merely made captives in the Adam-fall—not merely taken by the sword and bow of that potent conqueror, Sin—not merely dragged out of a happy, innocent Paradise into all the misery and wretchedness of this thorny, briery world, but made slaves to sin, and, worse than that, to sin’s master, Satan, that foul fiend, that accursed spirit, whose enmity against God is so desperate, that if there ever be joy in his heart, it is to have debased the image of God in the soul of man, and still to employ him in doing the foulest errands, until he degrades him more and more

fully into his own likeness.

But the idea of redemption includes more than that of captivity and slavery. It includes the idea of debt also; for in ancient times, when a man could not pay his debts, as we find in the case of the widow of one of the sons of the prophets in the time of Elisha, the creditor might take him, or if he were dead, his sons to be bondmen. So that in those days if he could not pay in purse he must pay in person; if he could not discharge the debt, he must become the slave of the creditor. But from this he might be redeemed by the payment of the debt. So it is in the things of God. Redemption implies not merely deliverance from a state of captivity and servitude, but also from a state of debt. What debt? The debt we owe to God’s justice. Our being entangled in the Adam-fall has not set us free from the law of God; debt is no acquittance. A man cannot, even as regards the laws of his country, by breaking them free himself from them. So as regards the law of God, a man cannot say, “I will break through all laws and trample upon all commandments, and then the law can have no power over me.” This would be adding sin to sin, defying God to his face, hurling defiance up to the very gates of heaven. We are still then as sinners amenable to the law; for it has not relaxed any of its stringent demands; it still pronounces and still will execute its awful sentence: “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” (Gal. 3:10.) And as the ancient creditor seized the debtor who could not pay his debt and carried him to prison; so the law will arrest every one found under it; and if the debt cannot be paid—and how can he pay it?—he will be shut up in hell until he pays the uttermost farthing.

And then there comes the grand climax and the ultimatum of all, which is death; for that was the originally threatened penalty. So that viewing men as sunk into a state out of which he has to be redeemed, we may look at him as a captive dragged away from his native land, as Adam was dragged out of Paradise; made the wretched slave of a harsh, impecunious taskmaster, who holds him

in bondage and servitude, and keeps him there till death comes to close the scene, which is but the opening gate to the second death, “where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.”

How feeble are all conceptions, how inadequate all words, how meagre all expressions to paint to the life what you and I and every man is as involved in the original transgression, and as having added to original sin the guilt and weight of our own actual crimes! O that a sense and feeling of this might deeply sink into our minds! O that it were written, as with the point of a diamond, upon our hearts! For sure I am that we shall never properly value redeeming love, atoning blood, justifying righteousness, and the gift of the Son of God until we have known experimentally the slavery of sin, and groaned as poor captives under the dominion of Satan. Till the iron has entered our very soul; till the fetters have galled our feet and the manacles our wrists, and we can look up to God and point to our bleeding wounds as inflicted by sin, Satan, and the law, we can never truly feel our need of or really value the redemption that has been accomplished by the suffering Son of God. But O, what a blessed change it is when the first ray of mercy breaks in upon the soul, and cheers the poor captive, who, like the prisoners in the dungeons of Naples, or those who have been just set free in Sicily, may have been groaning for years in the low dungeon. Let us compare him for a moment with those victims of tyranny who have been lately liberated. Our very heart bleeds to think of them as they lay in those miserable holes under the pressure of their irons, half starved, covered with rags, their bodies foul with filth, and half eaten up by vermin. How rejoiced must they have been to hear the prison gates giving way, and to see through the broken doors beams of the light of day shining into their dark cells, and to listen to the voice of their liberators cheering them to wait for a few moments till they should be released. Yet even their state and even their liberation are but faint emblems of the prisoners of hope, of the captives whom Christ's redemption sets free. For, like the poor Sicilian prisoners, we are, as under condemnation

and arrest, shut up in our dungeon cells, half starved, covered with filth and loathsome with vermin—the vermin of sin. But O to have the light of day breaking in through the prison doors, and to hear sounds from above of pardon and peace and blessed liberation,—is not this enough to make the poor prisoner's heart leap for joy within him? But was not this the express commission given to the blessed Lord? Was he not specially anointed to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound? (Isai. 61:1.) Yes, it is he who breaks in pieces the gates of brass and cuts asunder the bars of iron. (Isai. 45:2.) But O in what a way! Not by the arm of violence, but by the heart of suffering; not by the hand of strength, but by the hand of weakness nailed to the cross. For our prison is not a prison of stone but of sin; and could, therefore, only be broken up by Jesus being made sin for us who knew no sin. (2 Cor. 5:21.) He, therefore, gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity. Now, in thus redeeming us, in order that that redemption should become effectual, he must either have given a certain price equivalent to the debt, or he must have given himself. Redemption in ancient times could not be accomplished but in one of these two ways: the prisoner must be set free either by full value given for him, or else by the person who came to redeem him taking his place. Thus Judah offered to take the place of Benjamin that he might go free. “Now therefore I pray thee let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondsman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.” (Gen. 44:33.) So the Lord Jesus Christ must either come in his own person and take our place, or else he must pay a certain value that the prisoner under the law might go free. Blessings be upon his name! A crown of glory adorn his brow! He did both. First he paid the price in full. God held the law in his rigid fingers, and weighed the curse in one hand and the blood of his own dear Son in the other; for “we are redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.” God, the infinitely just and righteous God, held the scales with unerring hands, and when the

blood was put into one and our sins into the other, the blood was found to be double for all our sins, according to the testimony of the prophet. "Cry unto her that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." And well might it be double, for it was the blood of the darling Son of God, and thus all the virtue and validity of Godhead was in it. Then the law in a moment gave up its claims; then all the debt was at once discharged, and the millions of sins of millions of sinners were all put away, blotted out, cancelled, removed, cast behind God's back, and drowned in the depths of the sea, as that precious blood fell from the hands and feet and side of Jesus upon Calvary's cruel tree. He thus redeemed us by paying down the full price, as we read—"Ye are bought," that is, redeemed "with a price." (1 Cor. 6:20.) The law could not say "Not yet! not yet! The debt is not paid; the crimes are too great, the sins too black, the iniquity too foul. I want more! It is not enough yet!" But the law said at once "It is enough!" for what could exceed in value the blood of the Son of God, who himself is God? The blood of an angel, could an angel have taken flesh; the blood of a seraph, could a seraph have been incarnate; the blood of an archangel, could an archangel have become man, would not have been enough. The law could have said, "Thou art but a creature, Michael, Raphael, Gabriel: God requires all thine obedience; it is not enough." But who can require that God should render obedience? Who can demand that Deity should suffer, bleed, and die? When Deity, then, did suffer, bleed, and die, eternal Justice itself must cry "Enough!" But our Lord paid in Person as well as in blood; for we may draw a distinction between the Person of the God-Man and the blood which he shed as such; for he suffered but once on the cross, but was obeying the law in his Person during the whole time of his sojourn here below; and it was the dignity of his Person that gave efficacy to his atoning blood. He stood, therefore, as it were, between the wrath of God and his people; and it was as if by so doing he said, "Let the law discharge all its curses upon me. Here is my head: let the lightning

fall; I bare my brow. Let the wrath of God come upon nee, that my sheep may go free." It fell. For in this sense "the Lord bowed the heavens and came down, and it was darkness under his feet. The voice of his thunder was in the heaven, the lightnings lightened the world, the earth trembled and shook;" for we know that as a token of God's displeasure against sin in the Person of Christ, the very sun withdrew its light and the earth shook. But when the blessed Lord had thus endured the wrath of God by suffering in Person, it was enough; and he himself proclaimed with expiring voice, "It is finished." Then, and not till then, he gave up the ghost; God had accepted him and his offering; and, as a proof of his full satisfaction and his holy approbation, he raised him from the dead and seated him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.

Now it may be, and I hope it is so, that some of you have seen and felt yourselves at various times some of the foulest, filthiest, blackest, most polluted wretches that God suffers to crawl upon his earth: for though your lives may have been, and I hope are, free from outward spot, and you are made to walk in the fear of God, yet the shining in of divine teaching has discovered to you the depths of your fallen nature. If this be the case, the word "iniquity" is not too strong an expression for you; for you know it to be true. Your main concern, the spring of your chief anxiety, arises from this—not that the blood of Jesus Christ is not able to cleanse from all iniquity, for you have seen its sufficiency and suitability; but misgivings, doubts, and fears at times work very powerfully in your mind whether your iniquity has been purged by that blood; for it is in your eyes so great, so aggravated, so abounding, so unceasing, that apprehension seizes hold of your mind, and your conscience is painfully exercised clearly and fully to know whether that sin of yours can be, has been put away. You have, therefore, no objection to make against the price not being sufficient; you have no doubt whether the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. But your doubt is, and will be till God has blessedly satisfied your soul by speaking words of peace and pardon to your conscience, whether

you, even you, are washed in that precious blood; whether you are clothed in that justifying righteousness, and whether, when Jesus died upon the cross, he bore your individual sins in his own body upon the tree.

But how comprehensive is the expression “to redeem us from all iniquity;” iniquity in heart, iniquity in lip, iniquity in life. And we may observe that there are five things as regards iniquity from which the blessed Lord came to redeem us; its guilt, its filth, its power, its love, and its practice. By his blood he redeemed us from its guilt; by the washing of regeneration he delivers us from its filth; by the power of his resurrection he liberates us from its dominion; by revealing his beauty he frees us from its love; and by making the conscience tender in his fear he preserves us from its practice.

III.—But we now pass on to consider our third point: the effect of the Lord’s thus giving himself. It was not only to redeem us from all iniquity, but to purify unto himself a peculiar people. Redemption and purification go together. Holy John had a view of the wounded heart of his suffering Lord, and he saw two distinct things issue from that heart when pierced by the Roman spear: one was blood, the other was water. Hart has sweetly explained the connection:—

This fountain so dear he’ll freely impart;
Unlock’d by the spear, it gushed from his heart,
With blood and with water; the first to atone,
To cleanse us the latter; the fountain’s but one.

The blood was shed to atone for sin, and the water gushed from the wounded heart as a fountain of sanctification. Thus purification is connected with redemption, for the same pierced heart that poured forth blood to atone, poured forth water to sanctify. Here, then, we meet triumphantly the objection that the doctrines of grace lead to licentiousness. What is the leading doctrine of grace? That Jesus died that chosen sinners might live; that he shed his atoning blood for a peculiar people. That is the leading truth of the gospel. Now see how sanctification and purification are connected

with redemption; for he redeemed them for the very express purpose that they might be a peculiar people; peculiar in this, that they should be God’s people, and as such not only be redeemed by the blood of Christ but sanctified and made holy by his Spirit and grace. Is it not a libel, then, upon our most holy faith, upon the doctrines of grace, to say or even think that the water which issued from the broken heart of Jesus has less power than the blood; that he who gave himself to redeem us from all iniquity should allow us still to lie in our foulest sin: should redeem us from iniquity, and we still be in it; should deliver us from all evil, and we still wallow in it? When the Bastille was taken at the first French revolution, there was found in that terrible prison an old person who had been there forty years, and the man, whose locks were grey with age, could not be induced to leave his cell. He had become so habituated to the dark, that he preferred darkness to light; and he was such a stranger to the unknown world, that his grief was to be forced once more to come abroad into it. So there are many persons in Satan’s bastille who would not, if they could, come out of the dark cell, for they love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil, and would sooner grovel there amidst their native filth than be washed from their pollutions. This is just the case with the common tramps, to whom the greatest punishment is the Union bath. Cut off their matted locks, wash their dirty flesh; it is purgatory to them. So there are those who gladly riot in the pollutions of sin, who love the darkness of the cell, and hug themselves in the filth with which they are covered. But the Sicilian prisoners who have been lately liberated were not like these, or the man who had been shut up forty years in the Bastille. They were glad enough to come out into the light of day; to change their prison dress and prison fare, and be restored to light and liberty; for their dark cell had not quenched their love of freedom. So the poor child of God, to whom a thirst for freedom has come, can be satisfied with nothing but the light of day, and that happy liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. The great mass of men have no desire for freedom.

In the southern states of America, there are slaves so contented with their servitude that they would not accept freedom as a gift; nay, they look with the greatest contempt upon the free black man, and hug themselves in their slavery, as glorying in being a wealthy man's property. So the servitude of sin and Satan has so debased in all natural men the love of freedom, that they would sooner be slaves of sin than Christ's free men. As the wretched drunkard would sooner on a summer's eve get into a low pot-house, with a foaming cup and a pipe and the filthy conversation of his boon companions, than walk in the summer fields, inhaling the pure summer air, and recreating himself, as sober people do, in the cool evening breeze; thus sin has so debased the mind of man, so thrust its black brand into his inmost soul, that he is much happier in sin than in holiness. But not so with the saint of God. A new nature, a new spirit has been breathed into his soul, which makes him groan under the slavery of sin and long to be free. Even naturally there is sometimes kindled in the bosom of a slave an inextinguishable desire after freedom. And O, the love of freedom! We in this country are all happily free. Slavery cannot live in England's free air. It is our birthright to be free men. Liberty burns as a pure flame in an Englishman's bosom. We cannot conceive what it is to be a willing slave under a task master, to be satisfied with the food and clothing provided for us, and not have a will of our own. So when the flame of liberty has once been kindled in the bosom of a slave, what then can satisfy him but to be made free? To obtain this, he will break through a thousand obstacles, and run the risk of a thousand dangers, for he feels that he must be free or die. Many a poor slave has chosen death rather than return to servitude. So in grace. The Holy Spirit kindles in the breast of the child of God a love of freedom; makes him groan and sigh under the slavery of sin. He once was sin's willing slave; but he can bear that yoke no longer. He must be free: he longs to inhale the air of freedom; he cannot, will not live as he has done; sin is such a burden to his conscience that he hates both it and himself, loathes his slavery and

himself as being a slave. Now this is the first dawn of light upon his mind, the first kindling of the Spirit of grace in his heart. If he die, he must make the attempt, if he swim rivers, if he scale mountains, if he incur death in the attempt, he can no longer bear the yoke of servitude. Have you not in this manner felt the slavery of sin, and sighed, groaned, and panted to be delivered from it? When you have been entangled in it and made a captive by it, have you not abhorred yourself? How we look back sometimes to our past sins, and hate them and ourselves for them. It is by these inward feelings that we learn the miserable bondage of sin and long for a full deliverance from it. Now Christ came to set you free from all this miserable slavery, to redeem you by his precious blood from this bondage, darkness, doubt and fear, and to purify you to himself, that as washed in his blood, clothed in his righteousness, and sanctified by his Spirit, you might be eternally his. If, then, you have been as I have been describing, wretched and miserable under the burden of sin and longing to be free from it, will you not gladly hail any friendly beam of light that gives you hope of a full and perfect deliverance from your wretched servitude?

1. Now comes then the purification. Under the law, persons and things which had become ceremonially defiled, were purified in several ways, and especially four: by blood, by fire, by water, and by oil. First, there was purification by blood, as the apostle tells us, "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." (Heb. 9:22.) And you recollect, I dare say, when the high priest was consecrated to his high office, blood was put upon his ear, his hand, and his right foot, as well as sprinkled upon his garments. (Exod. 29:20, 21.) In the case of the leper also there was blood applied at the time of his cleansing, for by blood applied to him in the same way as to the high priest his leprosy was purged. So it is in grace. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," not merely by virtue of the atonement made by it on the cross, but by virtue of its being sprinkled upon the conscience. It is therefore called "the blood of sprinkling,

that speaketh better things than that of Abel;" and the apostle says, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works." (Heb. 9:14; 12:22.) In this way the blessed Lord purifies not only the persons of his people, but their consciences to serve the living God. Jesus thus purifies by blood. But when the blood of sprinkling comes from his gracious hand, what is the effect? First, it purifies the eyes of the understanding. The eyes of the understanding are by nature held in darkness, but when the blood of the covenant touches them, they are enlightened to see the efficacy of that blood, as the scales fell from Paul's eyes when Ananias touched him. And as divine sight comes through the hearing of faith, this was typified by the application of blood to the ear of the leper; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Next comes the purifying of the conscience which is guilty under the load of sin and dead works, from which spring bondage, doubt and fear. Then, with the conscience, there follows next the purifying of the affections, which need to be purged from fleshly idols and creature objects, that they may be set upon things above. Upon this follows the purifying of the lips, according to the experience of Isaiah, where the seraph flew to take a coal off the brazen altar, and by its application, purged his lips. The live coal was taken from off the brazen altar—a type of Christ's sacrifice. And thus, when there is a blessed discovery to the conscience of Christ's atoning blood, it turns the lips to speak a pure language, no longer a mixture of half Ashdod but the pure language of Canaan—to praise and extol free grace without any dash of legality.

But there is also the purification by fire. When spoil was taken in war by the children of Israel, there were according to God's command two ways of purifying it: every thing that could abide the fire was purified by fire, but what could not abide the fire, was to go through the water. (Num. 31:23.) So it is in grace: there is the fire, the furnace that God has appointed in Zion, and in that, all

faith and hope and love must be put. In this fire the dross and tin are consumed, and God's work upon the soul is separated from all counterfeit metal. So we read, "When the Lord shall have purged away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the Spirit of judgment, and by the Spirit of burning." (Isai. 4:4.)

But there is also purification by water. Thus, the high priest, on the great day of atonement, washed himself in water, both before and after he had taken the blood into the most holy place; and so he that let go the scape-goat, was commanded "to wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in water." (Lev. 16:24, 26.) Thus also when the Levites were taken from among the children of Israel for the service of the sanctuary, God said to Moses, "Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean." (Num. 8:7.) In a similar way, all ceremonial defilements were purified by the water in which the ashes of the red heifer were sprinkled; for we read of it that it was kept for "a water of separation; it is a purification for sin." (Num. 19:9.) All this was typical of the purifying water of the blessed Spirit, whereby the church is cleansed, as the apostle speaks, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26); "and this is the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus 3:6.)

Then again, there is purification by oil; for it was by this applied to the ear, the hand, and the foot that both the high priest was consecrated, and the leper purified.

In these four ways, therefore, does the Lord purify unto himself "a peculiar people:" by blood, by fire, by water and by oil—blood to sprinkle the conscience, fire to burn away the dross, water to cleanse the heart, and oil, the unction of the Spirit, to soften and make supple the affections! And all these four go together. None can be dispensed with, for each has its peculiar work and gracious effect.

2. But if the Lord Jesus Christ gave himself for us that he might

redeem us from all iniquity, and thus purify us unto himself, it was for a certain end—that we might be “a peculiar people;” “a people that dwelleth alone, and is not numbered with the nations.” The word literally means a people for a possession, and has not the Lord said of them, “This people I have formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise?” (Isai. 43:21.) It is as if he bought them and formed them, that he might look down from heaven his dwelling-place upon his saints on earth, and say “These are my people and I am their God. These are the people for whom I gave myself out of the bosom of my Father, in which I lay from all eternity as his co-equal, co-eternal Son, in blissful communion with himself and the Holy Ghost. And I gave myself for them that they might be eternally mine, to glorify me upon earth, and to be for ever with me in heaven.” If, then, the blessed Lord “gave himself that he might redeem us from all iniquity,” its guilt, its filth, its love, its power, its practice; from all iniquity, without and within, past, present, and to come; from sins of omission and sins of commission; iniquities as high as the loftiest mountains, as deep as the deepest seas; are we not bound by every sweet constraint of dying love to live to his praise? If he came for this express purpose that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and is now looking down from heaven his dwelling-place, having gone back to his Father’s bosom, with eyes of pity and affection upon us as “the travail of his soul,” and is separating us by his grace from this wicked world and from our no less wicked selves, what a load of obligation lies upon us to live to his glory! Shall his people have been redeemed by such sorrows and such sufferings from all iniquity, and then continue to live in sin? Shall he have suffered such cruel agonies of body and soul, that they might trample upon his wounds, and instead of repaying him with gratitude and obedience, repay him with that which his soul abhors? How can any one who knows anything of the blessedness of atoning blood and redeeming love and the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit continue in sin that grace may abound? Doctrinal professors

may do these things, for a mere letter knowledge of the truth brings with it no deliverance from the power of sin; but the living soul, in whom the God of all grace is carrying on his gracious work,—can it trample under foot the cross of the suffering Son of God? It is impossible that a man who knows for himself the redeeming efficacy of Christ’s atoning blood, and whose conscience is made tender in the fear of God, can, under the sweet influence of his love, deliberately crucify him again. Not but what there is a falling under the power of sin and temptation, as David and Peter fell; but there will not be a wilful sinning against him, when the blessed Spirit is bringing near his blood and grace and love. May we never forget that the suffering Son of God gave himself to purify unto himself a peculiar people—a people whose thoughts are peculiar, for their thoughts are the thoughts of God, as having the mind of Christ; a people whose affections are peculiar, for they are fixed on things above; whose prayers are peculiar, for they are wrought in their heart by the Spirit of grace and supplication; whose sorrows are peculiar, because they spring from a spiritual source; whose joys are peculiar, for they are joys which the stranger intermeddled not with; whose hopes are peculiar, as anchoring within the veil; and whose expectations are peculiar, as not expecting to reap a crop of happiness in this marred world, but looking for happiness in the kingdom of rest and peace in the bosom of God. And if they are peculiar in inwardly, they should be peculiar outwardly. They should make it manifest that they are a peculiar people by walking in the footsteps of the Lord the Lamb, taking up the cross, denying themselves, and living to the honour, praise, and glory of God. What has given so much force to the objection against the doctrine of grace as the ungodly lives of its professors? The strongest argument you can present to the unbelieving world in favour of the doctrines which you profess is a godly life. Let them see by your good works that you do adorn the doctrine, that you do bear fruits; and make it manifest by your conduct, in your family, in your business, in the whole of your life and deportment, that your

religion bears upon it the stamp of inward and outward holiness. This will be your best answer to the charge that your doctrines lead to licentiousness. Let them all be able to look at you and say, "Here is a man professing these doctrines; yet where shall we find one so distinguished for honesty, integrity, uprightness, liberality, kindness—for everything, in short, that adorns the gospel of Jesus Christ?"

IV.—To come to our last point, you must, if you belong to this peculiar people, "be zealous of good works;" not doing them grudgingly, not eking out a tardy, forced obedience, as though you hated Christ's yoke, and only bore it through a slavish fear of hell; but as full of holy warmth and earnest zeal, mourning that your good works are so few, yet making it manifest that you are zealous of them. But it may well be said, "Where shall we go to find a people like this? Far and near, over hill and dale, sea and river, may we look, and look till our eyes fail, before we shall see a people corresponding to this description." Yet there have been such a people. There were such in the days of the New Testament, and there have been such even in our own land; but in our degenerate times, where are we to "find a peculiar people" zealous of good works as described in the text? Are good works even mentioned or insisted upon in the ministry of the present day, and are they not thought rather to be marks of legality and bondage than of free grace and gospel liberty? You may indeed find one here and there who is not inconsistent, in whom there is no very great blot, who does live a little like a Christian; but to find those who shine as stars in Christ's right hand, cities set on a hill, lights placed upon a candlestick to give light to all in the house, where in these degenerate days will you find them? Yet the power of Christ's grace is the same, his blood the same, his love the same, and he can work in us, as he wrought in days of old, to make us and manifest us a peculiar people, zealous of good works. O that he would do so! It is my desire that he may—that you and I may be a peculiar people, and not be content with a

few lazy doings, but be zealous to adorn the doctrines we profess by that godly, holy, and consistent walk which is so desirable for our own peace as well as the glory of God. By so doing, we shall meet the charge brought against us by our enemies in the most satisfactory way, by showing that grace does not lead to sin, but to holiness in heart, in lip, in life.

175 The Inward Conflict between the Flesh and the Spirit

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning,

Sept. 2, 1860

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."

Gal. 5:16, 17, 18

There are many vital and essential points of difference between him that fears God and him that fears him not—between the believer and the unbeliever. But there is one more marked than any other, chiefly for this reason, that it comes more closely home to the heart, and accords more clearly with the experience of every child of God. This distinguishing mark is, the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, spoken of in our text. Those who are dead in sin cannot feel any such conflict, for in them there is no opposing principle to the flesh. The glorified spirits in heaven can have no such conflict, because in them the flesh has ceased to be. It is only then upon earth—only in the bosom of a saint, in this present arena of time in which is fought the good fight of faith, that there can be a conflict of the nature described by the apostle: the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these two so contrary the one to the other, that he cannot do the things which he would.

But let us seek, as far as we can, to be clear upon this point, for if the inward conflict be a certain mark of grace, we should be very careful not to mistake anything else for it. And this distinction is all the more necessary, since there is a conflict in the bosom of many who are not under the influence of divine grace. For instance, there may be a conflict in a man's breast who knows nothing of the life and power of God in his soul, between a principle of integrity and a principle of dishonesty. A man in business, say a merchant, a banker, a tradesman, or a person holding a confidential situation, may have an opportunity of realising a large sum of money by deviating from the path of rectitude, and he may have an inward conflict whether he shall abide by upright, honourable principles, or depart from them to secure the anticipated advantage. This might be a very severe conflict, but it would not be one between "the flesh and the spirit," between nature and grace. Or a person might have an inward contest between acting liberally or niggardly upon some occasion when his compassion or benevolence might be appealed to, and he might find a hard struggle within between a willingness to give and a spirit of covetousness to withhold. But this is not a conflict of nature and grace: it is merely a conflict of a better kind of nature against a worse kind of nature—of a higher species of flesh against a lower species of flesh. Or a man may have a conflict between bad temper and good temper; between giving vent to angry feelings and keeping them down; between carrying out his own inclinations in various ways, or subduing them on a principle of duty and conscience. All these struggles which natural men feel every day involve an internal conflict, but still not the same kind of conflict which exists in the bosom of one who fears God; for all these opposing principles are at best but flesh fighting against flesh. Their spring and end are merely natural and sensual, and when the conflict ceases, whether it terminates in the victory or the defeat of the better principle, it leaves the man just where it found him, under the power of sin and Satan, without God and without hope in the world. The very heathen, as we know from

their writings, experienced the same conflict, and it is to be found discussed at large in books of morality, which are utterly destitute of spiritual life and light. But how different is the conflict spoken of in our text, and which is known experimentally by all who are made alive unto God! Theirs is a spiritual conflict; a contest for life or death; an unceasing battle between nature and grace; between the flesh and the Spirit. Nor is the issue of this conflict, though prolonged, dubious or uncertain, for its end is certain victory, and not merely victory achieved for time, but a glorious victory obtained for eternity; for it is "the good fight of faith;" and we know that the end of that faith is the salvation of the soul, and the prize of that contest is the crown of eternal life.

If you look at the words which form our text, you will find that the apostle is speaking to the Galatians of "walking in the Spirit," and tells them that if they were enabled so to walk, they "would not fulfil the lust of the flesh." This leads him to speak of the way in which the flesh does lust, and also of the way in which the spirit acts against it as an opposing principle; the consequence of which is, that neither in one sense nor in another can a child of God do the things that he would. But he would comfort them by this reflection, that if they were led of the Spirit, and were walking in the Spirit, they were not under the curse of a condemning law but under grace, and therefore that the conflict, however sharp or long, would in their case end in certain victory.

In opening up these words, therefore, this morning, I shall, as God may enable,

I.—First, endeavour to describe how the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and how those are contrary the one to the other.

II.—Secondly, how from this results that we cannot do the things that we would.

III.—Thirdly, how, though we cannot do the things that we would, yet by walking in the Spirit we shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

IV.—Fourthly, if we are walking in the Spirit, and are led by the Spirit, then we are not under the law in its condemnation and curse, but under the Gospel in its salvation and blessing.

I.—But let me, before I enter into this conflict, define my terms; let me clear my ground. I like to leave nothing obscure and uncertain in the word of truth, or in my exposition of it, if I can, with God's help, cast any light upon it. By the "flesh," then, here we are to understand that corrupt nature, that sinful principle which we derive from our fallen parent Adam. However high or low, broad or narrow, however sensual or refined this principle may be; in whatever various ways it may work, it is still one and the same: it never rises beyond its level; it is and ever will be, amid all its varying shapes and lines, as the Scripture designates it, flesh. It is called "flesh" for various reasons. First, as derived by natural generation from Adam, who was our parent after the flesh. Secondly, from its being so naturally dead Godward, there being no heavenly strength or life in it, but like a lump of dead flesh, incapable of gracious actings, or of being transmuted into anything holy and spiritual. Thirdly, because its very tendency and end is corruption; for as flesh naturally dies, petrifies, and rots, so the end of the flesh, viewed in a spiritual light, is death and corruption: as we read that before the flood, "all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth;" and as the apostle speaks, "He that soweth to his flesh shall of his flesh reap corruption." (Gal. 6:8.)

I must now explain what the apostle means by the word "spirit." I understand, then, by the term "spirit" here not the Holy Spirit, but that which is produced by the Holy Spirit. As the Lord himself explains it, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And again, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Rom. 8:16.) So also, "I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless." (1 Thess. 5:23.) In all these passages we find the word "spirit" signifying not the Holy

Ghost, but that which is produced by the Holy Ghost; in a word, that new and divine nature which is produced by the new birth, the new man of grace, which is called "spirit" as being wholly spiritual, for the Spirit can produce nothing but what is spirit; for as the flesh produces flesh, so the Spirit produces spirit. And as he produces by his power upon the heart a new, spiritual, and holy principle, it is called "spirit," because it is the very life and power of God in the heart, bears the image of Christ stamped upon it, and in it dwell all the fruits and graces, teaching and testimony, work and witness of the Holy Ghost himself.

I must explain also the meaning of the word "lust" here. At the time of our present most excellent translation, the word had not that gross and sensual meaning usually attached to it now. It meant merely desire, whether of a higher or lower nature; whether it was grovelling in the sensual meaning of the term, or aspiring after higher things. In fact it was used much in the same way as the cognate and almost similar word, "list." "The wind bloweth where it listeth;" that is, where it willeth, or desireth. This must be sufficiently evident even to common sense, for the Spirit is said to lust, and we could not attach any gross idea to the lusting of the Spirit, for his desire must, like himself, be ever holy and pure. I take the word, therefore, in what I may call a neutral signification, as meaning simply desire, breathing, aspiration, and the bent of the mind strongly and eagerly towards any object; otherwise we shall confound the whole passage, for if we attach any sensual and gross meaning to the term, what shall we do with it when we come to describe the Spirit lusting after the flesh? We must give it a pure meaning there; so we will view the word as merely signifying a strong, ardent desire, therefore differing from "listing" not so much in signification as in intensity.

I. Having thus cleared our ground, we now come more immediately into the field of battle; and the first warning note of the gospel trumpet which I shall sound in your ears and in my own, is, to call us to look and examine whether we can find anything

in our hearts' experience corresponding to the vivid description here drawn by the pen of the Holy Ghost; for this will if not fully decide the matter on whose side we are, yet give us some good grounds for drawing a conclusion as to our state and standing before God; for if indeed we are partakers of a new and heavenly birth, we cannot be strangers to this spiritual conflict, and shall be so far manifested as fighting on the Lord's side against sin, Satan, and self. We know that we possess one of the two conflicting principles, "flesh," because all have that by their descent from our fallen ancestor; but we can only assuredly know that we have "spirit," by the internal testimony of the Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of the Most High. But in the absence of this clear and indubitable testimony, we may have an encouraging evidence of being partakers of the grace of God, by feeling a spiritual conflict perpetually going on in the breast; for how can there be a conflict in your bosom between "flesh" and "spirit" if you have no spirit there? How can there be a struggle in your heart between two opposing principles if one of those opposing principles be altogether absent? So that if you can find a conflict in your bosom between two contrary principles, and one of these is clearly on the side of grace against nature, of faith against unbelief, of God against self, of repentance against sin, of hope against despair, of submission against rebellion, and of godliness against ungodliness, you have so far an evidence that you are a partaker not only of the flesh, which you painfully know, but that you are a partaker also of the Spirit, which you pleasurable feel. But these two principles are described as being "contrary the one to the other." It does not say they are different; for things may be different, yet not contrary. Blue differs from black, and purple from scarlet; but they are not contrary, as black and white. But flesh and spirit are so contrary that they are opposed to each other upon every point. As white is opposed to black, as heaven is opposed to hell, as Christ is opposed to Belial, as truth is opposed to falsehood, as grace is opposed to sin, so "the spirit" and "the

flesh" are contrary to each other—by an opposition so close, and position so embracing every particular, that you cannot name a single part in which you will not find this contrariety thoroughly existing. But we shall see this better, perhaps, if we look at the various instances in which they are contrary the one to the other.

1. "The flesh" is hard, impenitent, obdurate, unrepenting; there is nothing in it soft, tender, and yielding to divine impressions; nothing in it that is melted into love or obedience. Whatever softness it may display on other points, even to tears, its very nature is to be obstinate and obdurate against God and godliness. But "the spirit," at least as divinely wrought upon, is tender, yielding, penitent, contrite, broken, submissive, bowed down before the throne of God so as to take the impression of his will and word. But these two feelings are utterly contrary. You never can reconcile penitence and impenitence, obduracy and contrition, hardness of heart and softness of heart, a seared conscience and a tender conscience. These things are as irreconcilable as light and darkness, as truth and error; but the flesh is naturally one and the spirit graciously the other; therefore, they are contrary the one to the other.

2. Again, the flesh is unbelieving. It is impossible that the flesh can believe—I mean, of course, in a spiritual and saving manner; for there is a natural faith that the flesh may, and indeed frequently does possess. In this sense, many believed in Jesus Christ in the days of his flesh, who were not made partakers of saving faith, for to the very persons of whom we read that "many believed in him," we afterwards find the Lord declaring, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." (John 8:30, 44.) So Simon Magus believed (Acts 8:13), and the apostle tells us that it is possible to have "all faith so as to remove mountains, and yet be nothing." (1 Cor. 13:2.) This natural faith the flesh may possess; but as to what the scriptures call the "spirit of faith," believing in the Son of God so as to receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of the soul; believing in the blood, and love, and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that the conscience is purged from filth, guilt, and

dead works to serve the living God; as to any faith that works by love, purifies the heart, overcomes the world, subdues sin, casts out Satan, and gains the victory, so as for ever to reign with Christ,—such a spiritual, divine, experimental, and saving faith as this never did dwell in the flesh. Faith, that is, saving faith, is expressly called in the Scripture, “a fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22); and is declared to be “the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8); for indeed it is among those good gifts and perfect gifts, every one of which “is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17.) Indeed how is it possible that a living and spiritual faith can be a fruit of, or dwell in the flesh, which is but a mass of unbelief, atheism, infidelity, and as such, is utterly unable to rise above unbelieving ground into the higher regions of a living faith? In this point then, the flesh and the spirit are contrary the one to the other; for what is so contrary as faith to unbelief? Jacob was not more contrary to Esau, David to Saul, or John to Judas.

3. Nor, again, can the flesh love. Its nature is not to love, but to hate; that is God’s own description of it. “The carnal mind” (by which is meant the disposition, inclination, and whole breathing of the flesh,) “is enmity against God.” And observe the word “enmity.” It does not say “an enemy,” but “enmity,” that is enmity itself. An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity never. Thus the whole flesh from head to foot, beginning, middle and end, root and branch, in life and death, is enmity, unmitigated, irreconcilable enmity against the pure Majesty of heaven. How then can spiritual love dwell in it? I expressly say spiritual love: for the flesh has natural love, as there are, as all must admit, natural affections. These may rise to a considerable height, and are what we may almost term, the fairest relics of the fall. There is, for instance, the mutual love of the sexes, which, as issuing in marriage, is the foundation of our nearest and dearest social ties. There is parental love; there is conjugal love; there is brotherly and sisterly love; there is the love of friends to each other, who are not connected by any bond

of relationship. How, indeed, could the world hang together but for these social ties? Society itself would fall into ruin, and an utter blank would succeed to all those tender relationships which sweeten life to thousands, and softens many a harsh track in this ragged world, but for natural love. What would society be if all were monks and nuns? Worldly people are not destitute of natural affection, for that is the last stage of a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:31); nay, on the contrary, a large amount of natural affection and kindness and good feeling is often displayed by persons who are enemies to the free, distinguishing, and sovereign grace of the gospel. God forbid that we should think they are destitute of kind and affectionate feelings towards each other because they are not partakers of the grace of God. To say so would be to speak in direct contravention of what we daily witness in acts of the greatest benevolence displayed by our fellow creatures in thousands of instances. Whence come our hospitals; the contributions to the amount of hundreds of thousands of pounds to suffering objects in all directions? Or whence come so many affectionate husbands and wives, fathers and children; so many tears dropped over the grave of the departed; so many sacrifices of time, labour, money, and even life itself to alleviate the wants of others, if there be no natural affection in the human heart? But when we come to spiritual love there the scene alters; there the flesh still manifests its innate character of being enmity against God. When, then, we test love by this divine touchstone, we find those who display the greatest natural affection to man often are fearfully wanting in affection to God. These, then, are opposed to each other; for the one is earthly and the other heavenly, the one natural and the other spiritual. When leaving earthly love we come to love to God, to his dear Son, to the word, to the people of God, to heavenly things, then we find the flesh so fearfully lacking. Then its true character becomes manifest. But in this very point the spirit specially shines, for here, as shed abroad by the Holy Ghost, the love of God dwells; here Jesus is felt to be near, dear, and precious; here are heavenly

affections and pure desires; here is union and communion with the Lord and his people.

4. So with prayer. The flesh is an utter stranger to spiritual prayer. It can make long prayers, as the Pharisees did, can go through a formal round of duties and self-imposed observances, and satisfy natural conscience by drawing near unto God with the lips when the heart is far from him. But the Spirit of grace and of supplications, prevalency with God in prayer, so that its sighs and cries enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and draw down answers into the bosom, wrestling with Jehovah as Jacob wrestled with the angel, and gaining access into the very presence of him who sits upon the throne of grace, so as to be made and manifested an acceptable worshipper of God in spirit and in truth,—such prayer as this never dwelt in the flesh. This is a height that the hand of the flesh never reached; which the eye of the flesh never gazed upon; which the ear of the flesh never heard of; nor the heart of the flesh ever conceived; for true, spiritual, and prevalent prayer is among the things “which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man,” but are among the things “which God hath prepared for those who love him.”

5. Nor is there, again, any spirituality in the flesh. Men may have a formal, natural, superstitious, and self-righteous religion; may make great sacrifices for their church or creed, and even yield up ease and name, property and life itself for it. How plainly may we see this in innumerable instances both in modern and ancient times. What built up our churches and cathedrals but this natural religion? What carries hundreds and thousands every Lord’s clay to churches and chapels? What sets up family prayer in thousands of houses? And what raises thousands of pounds on every side but this spirit of natural religion? In ancient days particularly, how we see this religion in lively action! How ancient warriors, men guilty of every crime, abandoned the world, shut themselves up in monasteries, macerated their body, lashed their

back with scourges, fed on coarse food, dressed in sackcloth, and died in what was termed the very odour of piety and holiness; and yet, viewed by the spiritual eye, must we not say that they began in the flesh and ended in the flesh? Where in all this was Jesus and his blood? Where the work of grace upon the heart? Where a total renunciation of all hope or help in self, and living a life of faith in the Son of God? All this natural religion, to whatever height it may be carried, whatever form it may wear, or however fair to the eye it may seem, is quite distinct from the work of faith with power, from the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit in the heart, and from that vital, spiritual, and saving religion which is the very life and breath of God himself in the soul of his saints. Where, in all this natural and fleshly religion, is there the new birth, without which none can enter the kingdom of heaven? Where is there any manifestation of Christ to the soul, or any shedding abroad of the love of God in the heart? The flesh may rise to a great height, but it never can rise up into anything spiritual, heavenly, saving, and divine. Like water, it can never rise above its own level. It is of the earth, earthy, like the first Adam, from whom it comes by natural descent. It may do for time, but will not do for eternity. It may gain the favour of man, but can never win the approbation of God; it may be crowned with human applause, but will never wear the crown of glory.

ii. But now we will see, with God’s help and blessing, what the spirit is as opposed to the flesh, for the word of truth declares that these are “contrary the one to the other.” So in taking a view of one, we at the same time take a view of the other.

1. Thus, whereas the flesh is hard, obdurate, and impenitent, the spirit is tender, contrite, repenting, broken; God producing this godly sorrow for sin in the spirit by the operations of his grace; for the blessed Spirit acts upon the spirit. He is expressly said “to bear witness” to it (Rom. 8:16), which he could not do unless he acted immediately upon it. We must ever bear in mind that the operations and influences of the Holy Spirit are upon the new

man of grace. He does not act upon the flesh, making it thereby holy and spiritual, or indeed any better than it was before. He does not transmute flesh into spirit, or sanctify nature into grace; but he acts upon the new man of grace, and brings forth, by his breathings upon it, every holy fruit and heavenly grace, to the honour, praise, and glory of God. For though born of the Spirit and itself pure and holy, and the very life of God himself in the soul, yet the new man of grace cannot act by itself. We may almost compare it to a locomotive, which cannot move except under the influence of steam; or the sails of a ship, which cannot act except under the power of the wind. So the new man of grace needs the power and influence of the blessed Spirit breathing upon it to move it forward into heavenly actings. Under, then, his divine influences and sanctifying operations, the spirit in a man's breast repents of the sins of the flesh, falls down before the footstool of grace, confesses and acknowledges them, and begs for some sensible manifestation of mercy, as feeling how suitable mercy is to a poor sinner's case.

2. The spirit also is believing. If you watch the movements of divine life in your own breast, you will find that there are two opposing principles there. There is that which doubts and disbelieves, and there is that which credits and believes; there is that which is always suggesting arguments, objections, difficulties, ever casting confusion over the plainest principles, and questioning the reality of every truth, however clearly revealed in the Scriptures, or traced by the hand of God in the soul. This I find and feel every day that I live. I find my carnal heart the very seat of unbelief; and that this spirit of unbelief is no dead principle, lying motionless, like a stone at the bottom of a clear brook; but is a living principle of action and movement, objecting, questioning, surmising, and raising up all manner of suspicions against every one of those vital truths which my heart most dearly loves. Would that it would give me a little rest; but that is not in its nature, for it is ever restless, unceasingly at work, and continually seeking

to confuse and darken the mind, and utterly to ruin the soul, by casting it down into the fathomless depths of infidelity. But the spirit, in opposition to this wretched spirit of unbelief, is believing. If the Lord has blessed you with a spirit of faith, you will find from time to time there is that in you which does believe, and yet may be sadly opposed by a contrary principle of unbelief. We see the conflict between the two principles in the man who fell down before the Lord with the words, "Lord, I believe." There was the spirit of faith in his heart, but he felt, as we feel, another principle in him, which could not, and would not believe; and he also felt that nothing but the power of the Lord could subdue that obstinate, unbelieving, principle. Therefore he cried, "Help thou my unbelief." Here we see the two principles plainly at work, which we ourselves so often feel. But everything that we have received in faith we have received in the new man of grace, not in our unbelieving nature. "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" asks the apostle. (Gal. 3:2.) When we hear in faith, then we receive the Spirit in his witnessing testimony to the reality and to the divine origin and nature of our faith, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," as made "spirit and life" to our soul. (Rom. 10:17; John 6:63.)

3. This Spirit is also loving. God is love; and the love of God is shed abroad in the hearts of his saints by the Holy Ghost. The blessed Spirit is a Spirit of love, not only in himself as a Person in the glorious Godhead, but as a spirit of love in a believer's heart. We, therefore, read of "the love of the Spirit." (Rom. 15:30.) If ever we feel—and I hope at times we do—heavenly affections mounting upwards, and a sweet flow of love to the Lord of life and glory; if ever we love him with a pure heart fervently, and love not only him, but his word, his truth, his people, his cause, his grace, his glory, all that testifies of him, comes from him, and leads to him; if ever his name be to us "as the ointment poured forth," it is by the Holy Spirit influencing the new man of grace in which this love resides, drawing it forth into holy exercise, fixing it upon heavenly

things, and especially upon the glorious Person of the Son of God at the right hand of the Father. So it is with love to God's people: we have no love to them in our carnal mind. The flesh hates God, and in hating God, hates those who bear the image of God. But the spirit in loving him that begat, loves those who are begotten of him; in loving the Lord, loves those who are beloved by the Lord; in loving Jesus, loves those in whom it can trace the mind and image of Jesus. And though this love may sink at times very low in the soul, yet as drawn forth by the operations of the blessed Spirit, it springs up and rises again; and under these gracious renewals there is once more a sweet flowing forth of love toward those who love the Lord. I know there is a spirit of love, not only to the Lord himself, but to his dear people, from my own experience, for I do feel at times sweetly springing up in my heart love to those in whom I see the likeness of the Lord Jesus, and I love them for his sake.

4. But this new spirit is also opposed to the flesh as being a prayerful spirit. There is no true prayer in the flesh. There is in it formal prayer—mock prayer, I may call it, but no spiritual prayer, because the Spirit of God does not move upon the flesh as a Spirit of prayer, nor does he act upon it by any divine influence so as to draw prayer out of it. But he does move upon the new man of grace, upon the spirit of his own begetting, and that as a spirit of prayer; for he is in us a Spirit of grace and of supplications, and intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. We are therefore said “to pray in the Holy Ghost,” and “with the Spirit.” (Jude 20; 1 Cor. 14:15.) Thus the Spirit of God in a believer's heart is a prayerful spirit, all true prayer springing from his powerful operations and divine influences. Now you may take up this point as a matter of self examination, and see from it how far you have an evidence of being a partaker of grace, from being able to find from time to time springing up in your bosom a spirit of prayer. If you have a spirit of prayer, you have the spirit spoken of in our text, and if you have the spirit it must be born of God; and if you

are born of God you are a child of God. Thus you may sometimes, by looking at this evidence, trace up your heavenly genealogy, and find an internal evidence of your being a partaker of grace, and as such an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. (Rom. 8:17.) The Spirit itself is said to bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:14); and this inward witness is not merely his direct testimony in the sweet assurance of faith, but his indirect testimony in helping our infirmities, and making intercession for us according to the will of God. (Rom. 8:26, 27.)

5. This spirit is also a spirit of hope. There is no real well-founded hope of eternal life in the carnal mind. The unregenerate, therefore, are declared to be without hope and without God in the world. (Eph. 2:12.) It is true that there is a false hope, such as thousands have in the indefinite mercy of God. This is what the scripture calls the hypocrite's hope. And what does the word of truth say of it? What is its nature and what is its end? Its nature the blessed Spirit compares to a spider's web, and its end is to perish and to be cut off. (Job 8:13, 14.) We see in scripture fearful instances of this. We see when God poured out his wrath upon those who had sinned against him with a high hand and had no faith or repentance given unto them, that their hope perished as in a moment. Saul's hope; where was it when he fell upon the sword? The hope of Ahithophel; where was that when he took a halter and hung himself? Judas's hope; where was that when he fell and his bowels burst forth? Yet Saul prophesied; Ahithophel went to the house of God in company with David; and Judas preached and wrought miracles. Could they have done these things without having some hope? But when the hypocrisy of their heart became manifest, then their hope sank and died. Thus it proved like a spider's web; not a good hope through grace as an anchor sure and stedfast, but the hope of the hypocrite which perishes and comes to nought. But the spirit in you who are born of God is a spirit of hope. With all your doubts, and fears, and difficulties, you are still hoping in the Lord, as David encouraged his soul when cast down within him, “My soul, hope thou in God.”

When you look at things without, and more especially at things within, you are sometimes almost cast down into despair. Your trials are so many, your sins so great, your heart so vile, your fears so strong, that it seems as if you must give all up; that there is still a spirit of hope in your bosom, and as this has been already the anchor of your soul in many a storm, so you again cast it forth that it may enter within the veil. You cannot give up that, whatever else you may give up. And you do well in holding it fast, for “we are saved by hope” (Rom. 8:24); so that if you have a good hope through grace, and the spirit in your heart is a spirit of hope, you have salvation already in your soul.

6. But the spirit also in the believer’s bosom is a spirit of praise. The flesh cannot praise God. It can murmur, fret, rebel, be peevish, and be filled with self-pity, but can never bless and praise God for manifested mercy. It is always unthankful. Even the very bounties of providence are for the most part received by it without gratitude. But the spirit in a man’s bosom, as wrought upon and influenced by the Holy Spirit, thanks and praises God not only for what it receives in providence, but much more for every blessing in grace; and when drawn forth into love towards his gracious and divine Majesty, a foretaste of heaven, a beginning of eternal bliss.

iii. But we read, to pass on further with our subject, that “the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.” I have already explained the meaning of the word “lusteth,” that it signifies earnest and intense desire. But besides this natural and innate lusting against the spirit, the flesh has three powerful friends who sustain it in all its lustings, and act upon it so as to maintain them in strength and vigour. First, there is Sin, which is its very element, its very constituent principle, and its own darling, firm, bosom friend. Sin is continually prompting, suggesting, and stirring up the flesh to its movements against the spirit. The flesh would, so to speak, lie at times dead if sin were not in its animating breath. But sin being the living, moving,

acting principle in it, is ever stirring up its lustings. Do you not find this by personal experience? You feel at times that the flesh in you seems dead, without any particular movement towards evil, though still a lifeless lump as to any movement Godward. But at other times there is a strong and active moving in the flesh towards evil, a lusting after things that God abhors, and which I need not further name. Here is sin working in it, acting upon it, influencing it, and moving it toward the positive commission of evil.

Nor is sin its only friend, foul friend though it be. Satan is another; for how Satan can, when permitted, work upon our carnal mind! What rebellion against God he can stir up! What enmity excite! What vile thoughts, dreadful suggestions, and base imaginations he can infuse, even to such heights as I dare not hint at, much less express. How the flesh resembles the sea! How calm at times is the natural ocean—how it mirrors the very heavens in its face! I have seen it with scarcely a ripple upon its surface. And I have seen it in a storm. But how different under these two aspects. It seems scarcely the same ocean in a calm, and when the yeasty billows rage as though they would sweep away every thing before them. So is the flesh; at times as calm as a millpond, and at others lashed into angry waves by Satan, who, as the Prince of the power of the air, acts upon the heart of man as the wind acts upon the ocean, exciting it to madness and rebellion.

Then there is the World, a fast friend of the flesh, which does not act upon it as Satan does, to stir it up into waves of rebellion, but to seduce and draw it aside, encouraging every movement of it against God and toward evil. So what with the corrupt nature of the flesh in itself, and what with these firm friends, though deadly foes to God and godliness—Sin, Satan, and the World—how can we wonder that this flesh of ours is ever lusting against the spirit, and desiring every thing contrary to God and godliness in a believer’s bosom; and if it cannot obtain its desires, yet exerts its whole power and influence to have its lusts gratified. Thus the flesh is continually lusting against the spirit. If the spirit, for instance,

wants to repent, the flesh lusts against any and every feeling of contrition, brokenness, or sorrow on account of sin, by hardening and steeling the heart against it, or by suggesting self-justifying excuses. If the spirit wants to believe, the flesh lusts against faith by raising up unbelief, and stirring up doubts and questionings, with a whole host of infidel objections against the truth. If the spirit wants to love the Lord or his people, the flesh immediately opposes it by stirring up enmity and dislike. If the spirit wants to pray, the flesh lusts against it by distracting the soul with wandering thoughts and in manner of vile imaginations, so as to confuse the mind, and as if to drown out prayer with a flood of abominations. If the spirit would be meek, submissive, filled with holy thoughts and gracious affections, looking up to the Lord and seeking after fellowship with him, desiring his presence and manifested love; if it ever be seeking conformity to Christ's image, to know his will and do it, or to be spiritual and heavenly-minded, the flesh lusts with bitter hostility against these gracious actings of the spirit, and shows its vile, earthly nature by interfering continually with every spiritual movement, damping the rising flame, pouring water upon it, and if it cannot quench it, endeavouring to mingle itself with it, so as to pollute it with its own stench and smoke. It is indeed impossible to describe the craft and subtlety by which the flesh manifests its deadly opposition to every thing spiritually good. The more spiritual the employments are, the more is this enmity and opposition manifested and for this reason, because the flesh instinctively knows that the great object of the Spirit is to crucify and mortify it. The flesh does not therefore dislike a natural, formal religion, which does not interfere with its lusts, but allows it its own will and way; but a religion which interferes with its lustings and actings, which curbs it, represses it, and will not suffer it to rule and reign, but crucifies it daily, the flesh cannot brook. It is like a man with a very bad temper: please him, he is all smiles; fret him, he is all frowns. Do the thing that he wants, he is the most agreeable man in the world; oppose him in the least

degree, his very eyes flash fire. So with our flesh: gratify it, fondle it, please it, its face is clothed with smiles; not a wrinkle or a ruffle is seen on its countenance; though really dragging the soul to hell, it strews the path with flowers, and flatters its victim with heaven at the very moment that it hurls him over the precipice. But oppose it, mortify it, crucify it, contradict, subdue, and subjugate it, put a bit in its mouth, a saddle on its back, and plunge your spurs into its side, you will then find what the flesh is—as violent as the greatest termagant, as furious as a loosened madman, and as contradictory as a passionate drunkard.

iv. But I must not dwell entirely upon this point. There is the contrary side of the picture; for it would be sad indeed if there were in us nothing but this dreadful flesh, with these vile and furious lustings. Through infinite mercy, through rich, superabounding grace, the spirit lusteth against the flesh, as well as the flesh against the spirit. I have shewn you who are the friends and backers of the flesh in this battle; but, through mercy, the spirit has its friends too, as well as the flesh, or it would come off very badly in this unceasing conflict; and very powerful friends too, for “greater is he that is for us than those that are against us.” We may say that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost—a triune God—is the friend of the spirit. But more especially fixing our eyes upon the Son of God as incarnate, we may view him as the especial friend of the spirit, for he is the sinner's friend, and being the sinner's friend, he will never let the poor child of God come off worst in this conflict. Left to itself, the spirit could not resist: it needs a divine influence upon it to teach its hands to war, and its fingers to fight. Abandoned to its own strength, the spirit must give way to the unceasing attacks of the enemy, for it is armed with all the powers of earth and hell. But the Lord comes to the rescue; the Son of God fights our battles; “for he girds his sword upon his thigh” (Psalm 45:3), and he rides forth “conquering and to conquer.” (Rev. 6:2.) But how does he come to the soul's help? With the promises which he applies with power to support and uphold the fainting

spirit; with the sweet manifestations of his Person, work, and love, which arm it with a power not its own; with the gracious influences of his presence, which put new life into it. Secretly and yet powerfully he strengthens, he supports, he encourages, he enables the spirit to carry on the warfare even unto death. The Holy Spirit, too, is especially tender of his own work upon the soul. He originally formed it; it is his own spiritual offspring; and as a mother watches over her babe, so the blessed Spirit watches over the spirit of his own creating. It is the counterpart of himself, for it is the spirit that he has raised up in the soul by his own almighty power. He, therefore, acts upon it, breathes into it fresh life and power, and communicates grace out of the inexhaustible fulness of the Son of God, thus enabling the spirit to breathe and act, struggle and fight against the flesh, so that the latter cannot have all its own way, but must submit and yield. For the spirit can fight as well as the flesh; can act as well as the flesh; and can desire good as well as the flesh can desire evil. What a mercy for us it is that there are those heavenly breathings in our soul of the spirit against the flesh, cryings out to God against it; and that the Spirit within us thus takes hold of the arm of Omnipotence without us, seeks help from the Lord God Almighty, and by strength thus communicated fights against the flesh, and gains at times a most blessed victory over it. For what can the flesh do against the spirit when animated by divine power? What are sin, Satan, and the world when they have to oppose a Triune God in arms? This makes the victory sure, that our friends are stronger than our foes, and the work of God upon our soul greater than anything sin, Satan, or the world can bring against it. This made the apostle say, after he had been describing the inward conflict, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 7:25.) And when he had enumerated the opposition that the Christian had to endure on every side, he cries out, as if in holy triumph, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Rom. 8:37.)

II.—But to pass on to our next point, the consequence of these two opposing principles is, that "ye cannot do the things that ye would." These words are true in two senses. 1. First, you cannot do the evil things that ye would. The flesh is always lusting towards evil, but grace is a counteracting principle to repress and subdue it. It cannot, indeed, wholly overcome its lustings, but it can prevent those lustings being carried out into open action; for the spirit lusteth against the flesh, and will not let it altogether reign and rule, nor have unchecked its own will and way. What a mercy lies couched here! for what would be the consequence if the flesh had its full swing? What evil is there which you would not do; what crime which you would not commit; what slip which you would not make; what open and horrid fall which you would not be guilty of, except you were upheld by Almighty power, and the flesh curbed and checked from running its headlong course? So you cannot do the things that you would in the worst of all senses. You cannot utterly forsake or forget God, as the flesh would incline you to do; you cannot deny or cease to call on the name of Christ, as the flesh would suggest; cannot live in sin, as the flesh would desire; nor can you give up all religion, nor abandon your hope, nor cast your faith to the winds, as the flesh would urge. The spirit in you, as influenced from above, prevents your doing the things that you naturally would by taking the side of God against the flesh, for it is armed with his authority, and is, as it were, his vicegerent in the soul. When, therefore, the flesh would burst forth into word or action, this vicegerent acts for God, and, like a magistrate or civil officer, speaks in his name, and in his authority thrusts back the malefactor. We can hardly tell at times how we are kept from evil; but it is almost always in obedience to the voice of this inward monitor. We can never praise God sufficiently for his restraining grace; for what should we be without it? What an unspeakable mercy, then, it is that you cannot be what you would be, nor act as you would act, nor speak what you would speak, nor do the things you would do, because there is in you who fear

God a spiritual principle which holds you up, and keeps you back from the ways of sin and death in which the flesh would walk. How this spirit of grace and godly fear kept Joseph in the hour of temptation! How it preserved David when he had Saul in his power as he lay asleep in the cave! How it kept Nehemiah in the fear of God from extortion and oppression! (Neh. 5:15.) And how in thousands of instances it has preserved the feet of the saints, and kept them from doing things that would have ruined their reputation, blighted their character, brought reproach upon the cause of God, and the greatest grief and distress into their own conscience!

So also, in a higher and somewhat different sense, "ye cannot do the things that ye would." You would be pure, holy, free from any working of sin; would believe without any doubt, love without any coldness, hope without any despondency, and serve God night and day without any disturbing hindrance. When you pray, you would have no distracting thought; when you read, you would do so with light, life, and power; and when you hear, it would be with a blessing resting upon your soul. You would never be troubled with any vile imagination, infidel thought, or base suggestion; you would ever love the Lord and his people; have your affections ever fixed on heavenly things; be ever blessed with manifestations of Christ's love; and ever walk in peace with God and his people. But you cannot do the things that you would. And why? Because you are still in the flesh, and the flesh opposes everything which is spiritually good. Thus, in a good sense you cannot do the things that you would; and in a bad sense you cannot. Hence the conflict, a conflict that will never cease whilst we carry about with us a body of sin and death.

III.—But as time is running on, I must now come to our third point, which is, how we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; which is, by walking in the Spirit. Now observe that there is a difference between the flesh lusting against the spirit, and fulfilling its lusts. It is one thing to have the lusts of the flesh working in you; it

is another thing to fulfil them, to be their slave and subject. But you may ask, "Can we be ever brought to that blessed spot where we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh?" Surely; nay more, we must be brought to it, if we are the saints of God. But you will say, How? Here it is then opened up by the finger of God before your eyes: "Walk in the Spirit." It is not, then, by making the flesh any better, by forming resolutions and vows not to listen to its wiles, or be entangled in them, and so overcoming by our own strength the unruly movements of our carnal mind, that we can be preserved from fulfilling its lusts. The evil is of such a kind that if it is suppressed in one point it will break out in another. It is like some diseases in a man's body: keep the disease from breaking out, it will work within; keep it from working within, it will break without. So it is with the flesh: it will work in some shape or other, either within or without; either by fraud or force. Thus we cannot subdue the flesh by the flesh, any more than we can subdue disease by disease. You may take a tiger and shut him up in a den: but he is a tiger still; pare his claws; still he has the tiger nature, and when his claws grow, and the den set wide open, he will use them as before. So it is with this flesh of ours: it is a chained tiger, but a tiger still. You cannot alter the tiger nature, though you pare its claws and though you draw its teeth. But how are you to be kept from walking in the lusts of the flesh, how are you to be enabled to live to the praise and glory of God, and to do those things which are pleasing in his sight? The answer is still the same: By walking in the Spirit. But what is it to walk in the Spirit? To have the Spirit of God given to us in large measure, so as to live under his influence, and to walk in the feeling possession of his power and his grace; to be baptised into the very spirit of the gospel; for the Holy Spirit to make our body his temple; and to live, and speak, and think and act as blessed with the enjoyment of his divine teachings, operations, and communications. If we walk in the flesh, we shall fulfil the lusts of the flesh; but if we walk in the Spirit, have our affections fixed upon heavenly things, are spiritually minded, have fellowship

with the Son of God, enjoy his presence, live to his praise, and have him formed in our hearts the hope of glory; if we thus walk in the Spirit, then we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, for the flesh will be subdued by the Spirit, and its lusts subjugated by his divine influence and efficacious power.

IV.—Now comes our last point, which is the blessed and most encouraging conclusion, drawn from the Spirit's work upon the heart: that if we are thus led by the Spirit by walking in him; if he be our Guide and Teacher; if he be continually operating upon our heart, and bringing near the influence of his grace; if he be in its and with us, guiding us into all truth, making and keeping us believing, loving, prayerful, tender, watchful, humble, contrite, and sincere: if we are thus led by the Spirit, we are not then under the law. Now whilst the conflict is going on in your bosom, you are often in your feelings under the law. The law's curse is ringing in your ears, the law's condemnation piercing your conscience. The flesh in some unguarded moment, it may be, prevails: you are entangled in some evil; you slip and fall into something which brings guilt upon your conscience. Now the law thunders; inward condemnation re-echoes its peals; and the soul falls into bondage, doubt, and fear. But if you are led by the Spirit; if that blessed Guide is pleased to lead you out of your self into Christ's blood and righteousness; if you are experimentally favoured with his blessed teachings and sweet influences, bringing with them light, life, liberty, and love, the law has no more curse for you; it cannot condemn you to hell, nor send your soul to lie for ever under the curse of God. For being led by the Spirit you are delivered from the curse of the law into the blessing of the gospel; from the bondage of the law into the liberty of truth; from law charges into gospel mercies; from the accusations of a guilty conscience, into the witness of a good, because a purged and sprinkled conscience; and to sum it all up in one sentence, are thus translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. O the blessedness of walking in the Spirit, and being led by the Spirit!

If, on the contrary, you are continually under the dominion of the flesh, yield to every vain or sensual movement, give way to every carnal inclination, then you bring yourself into doubt and darkness, bondage and fear. The law condemns and holds its fiery scourge over your shoulders. But if the Lord is pleased to bring your soul into the sweet liberty of the gospel, and baptise you into the love of Christ, then you are not under the law to condemn and curse you, but under the gospel to save and bless you. And this will not only save but sanctify you, for as you walk under the influence of the blessed Spirit, you will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; you will have power to subdue them, and walk before God in the light of his countenance. I do not say that we are always or indeed often here; but I am sure there is no real peace or happiness except as we know some measure of these things in vital experience.

Thus, in the words of the text, we have not only the conflict described, but the victory also. We are not left by it wounded and maimed in the field of conflict, doubting whether we shall come off conquerors; not left in uncertainty whether it will be a drawn battle, or whether sin, Satan, and the world shall overcome the grace of God. But we have the blessed testimony of God himself, that if led by the Spirit, we are not under the law, but under the saving blessings of the gospel. O blessed spot, to walk in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free! Not to be entangled in the yoke of bondage; but to know the truth and feel its sweet influence and power in our heart, bringing us out of the condemnation of a fiery law, and setting our souls down in blessed liberty at the feet of Jesus, in the sweet enjoyment of the blessed gospel of the grace of God, and thus divinely furnished to every good word and work.

The Inward Conflict between the Flesh and the Spirit

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Sept. 2, 1860

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other:

so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." Gal. 5:16, 17, 18

There are many vital and essential points of difference between him that fears God and him that fears him not—between the believer and the unbeliever. But there is one more marked than any other, chiefly for this reason, that it comes more closely home to the heart, and accords more clearly with the experience of every child of God. This distinguishing mark is, the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, spoken of in our text. Those who are dead in sin cannot feel any such conflict, for in them there is no opposing principle to the flesh. The glorified spirits in heaven can have no such conflict, because in them the flesh has ceased to be. It is only then upon earth—only in the bosom of a saint, in this present arena of time in which is fought the good fight of faith, that there can be a conflict of the nature described by the apostle: the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these two so contrary the one to the other, that he cannot do the things which he would.

But let us seek, as far as we can, to be clear upon this point, for if the inward conflict be a certain mark of grace, we should be very careful not to mistake anything else for it. And this distinction is all the more necessary, since there is a conflict in the bosom of many who are not under the influence of divine grace. For instance, there may be a conflict in a man's breast who knows nothing of the life and power of God in his soul, between a principle of integrity and a principle of dishonesty. A man in business, say a merchant, a banker, a tradesman, or a person holding a confidential situation, may have an opportunity of realising a large sum of money by deviating from the path of rectitude, and he may have an inward conflict whether he shall abide by upright, honourable principles, or depart from them to secure the anticipated advantage. This might be a very severe conflict, but it would not be one between "the flesh and the spirit," between nature and grace. Or a person might have an inward contest between acting liberally or niggardly

upon some occasion when his compassion or benevolence might be appealed to, and he might find a hard struggle within between a willingness to give and a spirit of covetousness to withhold. But this is not a conflict of nature and grace: it is merely a conflict of a better kind of nature against a worse kind of nature—of a higher species of flesh against a lower species of flesh. Or a man may have a conflict between bad temper and good temper; between giving vent to angry feelings and keeping them down; between carrying out his own inclinations in various ways, or subduing them on a principle of duty and conscience. All these struggles which natural men feel every day involve an internal conflict, but still not the same kind of conflict which exists in the bosom of one who fears God; for all these opposing principles are at best but flesh fighting against flesh. Their spring and end are merely natural and sensual, and when the conflict ceases, whether it terminates in the victory or the defeat of the better principle, it leaves the man just where it found him, under the power of sin and Satan, without God and without hope in the world. The very heathen, as we know from their writings, experienced the same conflict, and it is to be found discussed at large in books of morality, which are utterly destitute of spiritual life and light. But how different is the conflict spoken of in our text, and which is known experimentally by all who are made alive unto God! Theirs is a spiritual conflict; a contest for life or death; an unceasing battle between nature and grace; between the flesh and the Spirit. Nor is the issue of this conflict, though prolonged, dubious or uncertain, for its end is certain victory, and not merely victory achieved for time, but a glorious victory obtained for eternity; for it is "the good fight of faith;" and we know that the end of that faith is the salvation of the soul, and the prize of that contest is the crown of eternal life.

If you look at the words which form our text, you will find that the apostle is speaking to the Galatians of "walking in the Spirit," and tells them that if they were enabled so to walk, they "would not fulfil the lust of the flesh." This leads him to speak of the way in

which the flesh does lust, and also of the way in which the spirit acts against it as an opposing principle; the consequence of which is, that neither in one sense nor in another can a child of God do the things that he would. But he would comfort them by this reflection, that if they were led of the Spirit, and were walking in the Spirit, they were not under the curse of a condemning law but under grace, and therefore that the conflict, however sharp or long, would in their case end in certain victory.

In opening up these words, therefore, this morning, I shall, as God may enable,

I.—First, endeavour to describe how the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and how those are contrary the one to the other.

II.—Secondly, how from this results that we cannot do the things that we would.

III.—Thirdly, how, though we cannot do the things that we would, yet by walking in the Spirit we shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

IV.—Fourthly, if we are walking in the Spirit, and are led by the Spirit, then we are not under the law in its condemnation and curse, but under the Gospel in its salvation and blessing.

I.—But let me, before I enter into this conflict, define my terms; let me clear my ground. I like to leave nothing obscure and uncertain in the word of truth, or in my exposition of it, if I can, with God's help, cast any light upon it. By the "flesh," then, here we are to understand that corrupt nature, that sinful principle which we derive from our fallen parent Adam. However high or low, broad or narrow, however sensual or refined this principle may be; in whatever various ways it may work, it is still one and the same: it never rises beyond its level; it is and ever will be, amid all its varying shapes and lines, as the Scripture designates it, flesh. It is called "flesh" for various reasons. First, as derived by natural generation from Adam, who was our parent after the flesh. Secondly, from its being so naturally dead Godward, there being

no heavenly strength or life in it, but like a lump of dead flesh, incapable of gracious actings, or of being transmuted into anything holy and spiritual. Thirdly, because its very tendency and end is corruption; for as flesh naturally dies, petrifies, and rots, so the end of the flesh, viewed in a spiritual light, is death and corruption: as we read that before the flood, "all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth;" and as the apostle speaks, "He that soweth to his flesh shall of his flesh reap corruption." (Gal. 6:8.)

I must now explain what the apostle means by the word "spirit." I understand, then, by the term "spirit" here not the Holy Spirit, but that which is produced by the Holy Spirit. As the Lord himself explains it, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And again, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Rom. 8:16.) So also, "I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless." (1 Thess. 5:23.) In all these passages we find the word "spirit" signifying not the Holy Ghost, but that which is produced by the Holy Ghost; in a word, that new and divine nature which is produced by the new birth, the new man of grace, which is called "spirit" as being wholly spiritual, for the Spirit can produce nothing but what is spirit; for as the flesh produces flesh, so the Spirit produces spirit. And as he produces by his power upon the heart a new, spiritual, and holy principle, it is called "spirit," because it is the very life and power of God in the heart, bears the image of Christ stamped upon it, and in it dwell all the fruits and graces, teaching and testimony, work and witness of the Holy Ghost himself.

I must explain also the meaning of the word "lust" here. At the time of our present most excellent translation, the word had not that gross and sensual meaning usually attached to it now. It meant merely desire, whether of a higher or lower nature; whether it was grovelling in the sensual meaning of the term, or aspiring after higher things. In fact it was used much in the same way as the cognate and almost similar word, "list." "The wind bloweth

where it listeth;” that is, where it willeth, or desireth. This must be sufficiently evident even to common sense, for the Spirit is said to lust, and we could not attach any gross idea to the lusting of the Spirit, for his desire must, like himself, be ever holy and pure. I take the word, therefore, in what I may call a neutral signification, as meaning simply desire, breathing, aspiration, and the bent of the mind strongly and eagerly towards any object; otherwise we shall confound the whole passage, for if we attach any sensual and gross meaning to the term, what shall we do with it when we come to describe the Spirit lusting after the flesh? We must give it a pure meaning there; so we will view the word as merely signifying a strong, ardent desire, therefore differing from “lusting” not so much in signification as in intensity.

I. Having thus cleared our ground, we now come more immediately into the field of battle; and the first warning note of the gospel trumpet which I shall sound in your ears and in my own, is, to call us to look and examine whether we can find anything in our hearts’ experience corresponding to the vivid description here drawn by the pen of the Holy Ghost; for this will if not fully decide the matter on whose side we are, yet give us some good grounds for drawing a conclusion as to our state and standing before God; for if indeed we are partakers of a new and heavenly birth, we cannot be strangers to this spiritual conflict, and shall be so far manifested as fighting on the Lord’s side against sin, Satan, and self. We know that we possess one of the two conflicting principles, “flesh,” because all have that by their descent from our fallen ancestor; but we can only assuredly know that we have “spirit,” by the internal testimony of the Spirit of God bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of the Most High. But in the absence of this clear and indubitable testimony, we may have an encouraging evidence of being partakers of the grace of God, by feeling a spiritual conflict perpetually going on in the breast; for how can there be a conflict in your bosom between “flesh” and “spirit” if you have no spirit there? How can there be

a struggle in your heart between two opposing principles if one of those opposing principles be altogether absent? So that if you can find a conflict in your bosom between two contrary principles, and one of these is clearly on the side of grace against nature, of faith against unbelief, of God against self, of repentance against sin, of hope against despair, of submission against rebellion, and of godliness against ungodliness, you have so far an evidence that you are a partaker not only of the flesh, which you painfully know, but that you are a partaker also of the Spirit, which you pleurably feel. But these two principles are described as being “contrary the one to the other.” It does not say they are different; for things may be different, yet not contrary. Blue differs from black, and purple from scarlet; but they are not contrary, as black and white. But flesh and spirit are so contrary that they are opposed to each other upon every point. As white is opposed to black, as heaven is opposed to hell, as Christ is opposed to Belial, as truth is opposed to falsehood, as grace is opposed to sin, so “the spirit” and “the flesh” are contrary to each other—by an opposition so close, and position so embracing every particular, that you cannot name a single part in which you will not find this contrariety thoroughly existing. But we shall see this better, perhaps, if we look at the various instances in which they are contrary the one to the other.

1. “The flesh” is hard, impenitent, obdurate, unrepenting; there is nothing in it soft, tender, and yielding to divine impressions; nothing in it that is melted into love or obedience. Whatever softness it may display on other points, even to tears, its very nature is to be obstinate and obdurate against God and godliness. But “the spirit,” at least as divinely wrought upon, is tender, yielding, penitent, contrite, broken, submissive, bowed down before the throne of God so as to take the impression of his will and word. But these two feelings are utterly contrary. You never can reconcile penitence and impenitence, obduracy and contrition, hardness of heart and softness of heart, a seared conscience and a tender conscience. These things are as irreconcilable as light and darkness, as truth

and error; but the flesh is naturally one and the spirit graciously the other; therefore, they are contrary the one to the other.

2. Again, the flesh is unbelieving. It is impossible that the flesh can believe—I mean, of course, in a spiritual and saving manner; for there is a natural faith that the flesh may, and indeed frequently does possess. In this sense, many believed in Jesus Christ in the days of his flesh, who were not made partakers of saving faith, for to the very persons of whom we read that “many believed in him,” we afterwards find the Lord declaring, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.” (John 8:30, 44.) So Simon Magus believed (Acts 8:13), and the apostle tells us that it is possible to have “all faith so as to remove mountains, and yet be nothing.” (1 Cor. 13:2.) This natural faith the flesh may possess; but as to what the scriptures call the “spirit of faith,” believing in the Son of God so as to receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of the soul; believing in the blood, and love, and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that the conscience is purged from filth, guilt, and dead works to serve the living God; as to any faith that works by love, purifies the heart, overcomes the world, subdues sin, casts out Satan, and gains the victory, so as for ever to reign with Christ,—such a spiritual, divine, experimental, and saving faith as this never did dwell in the flesh. Faith, that is, saving faith, is expressly called in the Scripture, “a fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22); and is declared to be “the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8); for indeed it is among those good gifts and perfect gifts, every one of which “is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17.) Indeed how is it possible that a living and spiritual faith can be a fruit of, or dwell in the flesh, which is but a mass of unbelief, atheism, infidelity, and as such, is utterly unable to rise above unbelieving ground into the higher regions of a living faith? In this point then, the flesh and the spirit are contrary the one to the other; for what is so contrary as faith to unbelief? Jacob was not more contrary to Esau, David to Saul, or John to Judas.

3. Nor, again, can the flesh love. Its nature is not to love, but to hate; that is God’s own description of it. “The carnal mind” (by which is meant the disposition, inclination, and whole breathing of the flesh,) “is enmity against God.” And observe the word “enmity.” It does not say “an enemy,” but “enmity,” that is enmity itself. An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity never. Thus the whole flesh from head to foot, beginning, middle and end, root and branch, in life and death, is enmity, unmitigated, irreconcilable enmity against the pure Majesty of heaven. How then can spiritual love dwell in it? I expressly say spiritual love: for the flesh has natural love, as there are, as all must admit, natural affections. These may rise to a considerable height, and are what we may almost term, the fairest relics of the fall. There is, for instance, the mutual love of the sexes, which, as issuing in marriage, is the foundation of our nearest and dearest social ties. There is parental love; there is conjugal love; there is brotherly and sisterly love; there is the love of friends to each other, who are not connected by any bond of relationship. How, indeed, could the world hang together but for these social ties? Society itself would fall into ruin, and an utter blank would succeed to all those tender relationships which sweeten life to thousands, and softens many a harsh track in this ragged world, but for natural love. What would society be if all were monks and nuns? Worldly people are not destitute of natural affection, for that is the last stage of a reprobate mind (Rom. 1:31); nay, on the contrary, a large amount of natural affection and kindness and good feeling is often displayed by persons who are enemies to the free, distinguishing, and sovereign grace of the gospel. God forbid that we should think they are destitute of kind and affectionate feelings towards each other because they are not partakers of the grace of God. To say so would be to speak in direct contravention of what we daily witness in acts of the greatest benevolence displayed by our fellow creatures in thousands of instances. Whence come our hospitals; the contributions to the amount of hundreds of thousands of pounds to suffering objects

in all directions? Or whence come so many affectionate husbands and wives, fathers and children; so many tears dropped over the grave of the departed; so many sacrifices of time, labour, money, and even life itself to alleviate the wants of others, if there be no natural affection in the human heart? But when we come to spiritual love there the scene alters; there the flesh still manifests its innate character of being enmity against God. When, then, we test love by this divine touchstone, we find those who display the greatest natural affection to man often are fearfully wanting in affection to God. These, then, are opposed to each other; for the one is earthly and the other heavenly, the one natural and the other spiritual. When leaving earthly love we come to love to God, to his dear Son, to the word, to the people of God, to heavenly things, then we find the flesh so fearfully lacking. Then its true character becomes manifest. But in this very point the spirit specially shines, for here, as shed abroad by the Holy Ghost, the love of God dwells; here Jesus is felt to be near, dear, and precious; here are heavenly affections and pure desires; here is union and communion with the Lord and his people.

4. So with prayer. The flesh is an utter stranger to spiritual prayer. It can make long prayers, as the Pharisees did, can go through a formal round of duties and self-imposed observances, and satisfy natural conscience by drawing near unto God with the lips when the heart is far from him. But the Spirit of grace and of supplications, prevalency with God in prayer, so that its sighs and cries enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and draw down answers into the bosom, wrestling with Jehovah as Jacob wrestled with the angel, and gaining access into the very presence of him who sits upon the throne of grace, so as to be made and manifested an acceptable worshipper of God in spirit and in truth,—such prayer as this never dwelt in the flesh. This is a height that the hand of the flesh never reached; which the eye of the flesh never gazed upon; which the ear of the flesh never heard of; nor the heart of the flesh ever conceived; for true, spiritual, and

prevalent prayer is among the things “which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man,” but are among the things “which God hath prepared for those who love him.”

5. Nor is there, again, any spirituality in the flesh. Men may have a formal, natural, superstitious, and self-righteous religion; may make great sacrifices for their church or creed, and even yield up ease and name, property and life itself for it. How plainly may we see this in innumerable instances both in modern and ancient times. What built up our churches and cathedrals but this natural religion? What carries hundreds and thousands every Lord’s clay to churches and chapels? What sets up family prayer in thousands of houses? And what raises thousands of pounds on every side but this spirit of natural religion? In ancient days particularly, how we see this religion in lively action! How ancient warriors, men guilty of every crime, abandoned the world, shut themselves up in monasteries, macerated their body, lashed their back with scourges, fed on coarse food, dressed in sackcloth, and died in what was termed the very odour of piety and holiness; and yet, viewed by the spiritual eye, must we not say that they began in the flesh and ended in the flesh? Where in all this was Jesus and his blood? Where the work of grace upon the heart? Where a total renunciation of all hope or help in self, and living a life of faith in the Son of God? All this natural religion, to whatever height it may be carried, whatever form it may wear, or however fair to the eye it may seem, is quite distinct from the work of faith with power, from the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit in the heart, and from that vital, spiritual, and saving religion which is the very life and breath of God himself in the soul of his saints. Where, in all this natural and fleshly religion, is there the new birth, without which none can enter the kingdom of heaven? Where is there any manifestation of Christ to the soul, or any shedding abroad of the love of God in the heart? The flesh may rise to a great height, but it never can rise up into anything spiritual, heavenly, saving, and

divine. Like water, it can never rise above its own level. It is of the earth, earthy, like the first Adam, from whom it comes by natural descent. It may do for time, but will not do for eternity. It may gain the favour of man, but can never win the approbation of God; it may be crowned with human applause, but will never wear the crown of glory.

ii. But now we will see, with God's help and blessing, what the spirit is as opposed to the flesh, for the word of truth declares that these are "contrary the one to the other." So in taking a view of one, we at the same time take a view of the other.

1. Thus, whereas the flesh is hard, obdurate, and impenitent, the spirit is tender, contrite, repenting, broken; God producing this godly sorrow for sin in the spirit by the operations of his grace; for the blessed Spirit acts upon the spirit. He is expressly said "to bear witness" to it (Rom. 8:16), which he could not do unless he acted immediately upon it. We must ever bear in mind that the operations and influences of the Holy Spirit are upon the new man of grace. He does not act upon the flesh, making it thereby holy and spiritual, or indeed any better than it was before. He does not transmute flesh into spirit, or sanctify nature into grace; but he acts upon the new man of grace, and brings forth, by his breathings upon it, every holy fruit and heavenly grace, to the honour, praise, and glory of God. For though born of the Spirit and itself pure and holy, and the very life of God himself in the soul, yet the new man of grace cannot act by itself. We may almost compare it to a locomotive, which cannot move except under the influence of steam; or the sails of a ship, which cannot act except under the power of the wind. So the new man of grace needs the power and influence of the blessed Spirit breathing upon it to move it forward into heavenly actings. Under, then, his divine influences and sanctifying operations, the spirit in a man's breast repents of the sins of the flesh, falls down before the footstool of grace, confesses and acknowledges them, and begs for some sensible manifestation of mercy, as feeling how suitable mercy is

to a poor sinner's case.

2. The spirit also is believing. If you watch the movements of divine life in your own breast, you will find that there are two opposing principles there. There is that which doubts and disbelieves, and there is that which credits and believes; there is that which is always suggesting arguments, objections, difficulties, ever casting confusion over the plainest principles, and questioning the reality of every truth, however clearly revealed in the Scriptures, or traced by the hand of God in the soul. This I find and feel every day that I live. I find my carnal heart the very seat of unbelief; and that this spirit of unbelief is no dead principle, lying motionless, like a stone at the bottom of a clear brook; but is a living principle of action and movement, objecting, questioning, surmising, and raising up all manner of suspicions against every one of those vital truths which my heart most dearly loves. Would that it would give me a little rest; but that is not in its nature, for it is ever restless, unceasingly at work, and continually seeking to confuse and darken the mind, and utterly to ruin the soul, by casting it down into the fathomless depths of infidelity. But the spirit, in opposition to this wretched spirit of unbelief, is believing. If the Lord has blessed you with a spirit of faith, you will find from time to time there is that in you which does believe, and yet may be sadly opposed by a contrary principle of unbelief. We see the conflict between the two principles in the man who fell down before the Lord with the words, "Lord, I believe." There was the spirit of faith in his heart, but he felt, as we feel, another principle in him, which could not, and would not believe; and he also felt that nothing but the power of the Lord could subdue that obstinate, unbelieving, principle. Therefore he cried, "Help thou my unbelief." Here we see the two principles plainly at work, which we ourselves so often feel. But everything that we have received in faith we have received in the new man of grace, not in our unbelieving nature. "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" asks the apostle. (Gal. 3:2.) When we hear in faith, then we receive the

Spirit in his witnessing testimony to the reality and to the divine origin and nature of our faith, for “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” as made “spirit and life” to our soul. (Rom. 10:17; John 6:63.)

3. This Spirit is also loving. God is love; and the love of God is shed abroad in the hearts of his saints by the Holy Ghost. The blessed Spirit is a Spirit of love, not only in himself as a Person in the glorious Godhead, but as a spirit of love in a believer’s heart. We, therefore, read of “the love of the Spirit.” (Rom. 15:30.) If ever we feel—and I hope at times we do—heavenly affections mounting upwards, and a sweet flow of love to the Lord of life and glory; if ever we love him with a pure heart fervently, and love not only him, but his word, his truth, his people, his cause, his grace, his glory, all that testifies of him, comes from him, and leads to him; if ever his name be to us “as the ointment poured forth,” it is by the Holy Spirit influencing the new man of grace in which this love resides, drawing it forth into holy exercise, fixing it upon heavenly things, and especially upon the glorious Person of the Son of God at the right hand of the Father. So it is with love to God’s people: we have no love to them in our carnal mind. The flesh hates God, and in hating God, hates those who bear the image of God. But the spirit in loving him that begat, loves those who are begotten of him; in loving the Lord, loves those who are beloved by the Lord; in loving Jesus, loves those in whom it can trace the mind and image of Jesus. And though this love may sink at times very low in the soul, yet as drawn forth by the operations of the blessed Spirit, it springs up and rises again; and under these gracious renewals there is once more a sweet flowing forth of love toward those who love the Lord. I know there is a spirit of love, not only to the Lord himself, but to his dear people, from my own experience, for I do feel at times sweetly springing up in my heart love to those in whom I see the likeness of the Lord Jesus, and I love them for his sake.

4. But this new spirit is also opposed to the flesh as being a

prayerful spirit. There is no true prayer in the flesh. There is in it formal prayer—mock prayer, I may call it, but no spiritual prayer, because the Spirit of God does not move upon the flesh as a Spirit of prayer, nor does he act upon it by any divine influence so as to draw prayer out of it. But he does move upon the new man of grace, upon the spirit of his own begetting, and that as a spirit of prayer; for he is in us a Spirit of grace and of supplications, and intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. We are therefore said “to pray in the Holy Ghost,” and “with the Spirit.” (Jude 20; 1 Cor. 14:15.) Thus the Spirit of God in a believer’s heart is a prayerful spirit, all true prayer springing from his powerful operations and divine influences. Now you may take up this point as a matter of self examination, and see from it how far you have an evidence of being a partaker of grace, from being able to find from time to time springing up in your bosom a spirit of prayer. If you have a spirit of prayer, you have the spirit spoken of in our text, and if you have the spirit it must be born of God; and if you are born of God you are a child of God. Thus you may sometimes, by looking at this evidence, trace up your heavenly genealogy, and find an internal evidence of your being a partaker of grace, and as such an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. (Rom. 8:17.) The Spirit itself is said to bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:14); and this inward witness is not merely his direct testimony in the sweet assurance of faith, but his indirect testimony in helping our infirmities, and making intercession for us according to the will of God. (Rom. 8:26, 27.)

5. This spirit is also a spirit of hope. There is no real well-founded hope of eternal life in the carnal mind. The unregenerate, therefore, are declared to be without hope and without God in the world. (Eph. 2:12.) It is true that there is a false hope, such as thousands have in the indefinite mercy of God. This is what the scripture calls the hypocrite’s hope. And what does the word of truth say of it? What is its nature and what is its end? Its nature the blessed Spirit compares to a spider’s web, and its end is to

perish and to be cut off. (Job 8:13, 14.) We see in scripture fearful instances of this. We see when God poured out his wrath upon those who had sinned against him with a high hand and had no faith or repentance given unto them, that their hope perished as in a moment. Saul's hope; where was it when he fell upon the sword? The hope of Ahithophel; where was that when he took a halter and hung himself? Judas's hope; where was that when he fell and his bowels burst forth? Yet Saul prophesied; Ahithophel went to the house of God in company with David; and Judas preached and wrought miracles. Could they have done these things without having some hope? But when the hypocrisy of their heart became manifest, then their hope sank and died. Thus it proved like a spider's web; not a good hope through grace as an anchor sure and stedfast, but the hope of the hypocrite which perishes and comes to nought. But the spirit in you who are born of God is a spirit of hope. With all your doubts, and fears, and difficulties, you are still hoping in the Lord, as David encouraged his soul when cast down within him, "My soul, hope thou in God." When you look at things without, and more especially at things within, you are sometimes almost cast down into despair. Your trials are so many, your sins so great, your heart so vile, your fears so strong, that it seems as if you must give all up; that there is still a spirit of hope in your bosom, and as this has been already the anchor of your soul in many a storm, so you again cast it forth that it may enter within the veil. You cannot give up that, whatever else you may give up. And you do well in holding it fast, for "we are saved by hope" (Rom. 8:24); so that if you have a good hope through grace, and the spirit in your heart is a spirit of hope, you have salvation already in your soul.

6. But the spirit also in the believer's bosom is a spirit of praise. The flesh cannot praise God. It can murmur, fret, rebel, be peevish, and be filled with self-pity, but can never bless and praise God for manifested mercy. It is always unthankful. Even the very bounties of providence are for the most part received by it without gratitude.

But the spirit in a man's bosom, as wrought upon and influenced by the Holy Spirit, thanks and praises God not only for what it receives in providence, but much more for every blessing in grace; and when drawn forth into love towards his gracious and divine Majesty, a foretaste of heaven, a beginning of eternal bliss.

iii. But we read, to pass on further with our subject, that "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh." I have already explained the meaning of the word "lusteth," that it signifies earnest and intense desire. But besides this natural and innate lusting against the spirit, the flesh has three powerful friends who sustain it in all its lustings, and act upon it so as to maintain them in strength and vigour. First, there is Sin, which is its very element, its very constituent principle, and its own darling, firm, bosom friend. Sin is continually prompting, suggesting, and stirring up the flesh to its movements against the spirit. The flesh would, so to speak, lie at times dead if sin were not in its animating breath. But sin being the living, moving, acting principle in it, is ever stirring up its lustings. Do you not find this by personal experience? You feel at times that the flesh in you seems dead, without any particular movement towards evil, though still a lifeless lump as to any movement Godward. But at other times there is a strong and active moving in the flesh towards evil, a lusting after things that God abhors, and which I need not further name. Here is sin working in it, acting upon it, influencing it, and moving it toward the positive commission of evil.

Nor is sin its only friend, foul friend though it be. Satan is another; for how Satan can, when permitted, work upon our carnal mind! What rebellion against God he can stir up! What enmity excite! What vile thoughts, dreadful suggestions, and base imaginations he can infuse, even to such heights as I dare not hint at, much less express. How the flesh resembles the sea! How calm at times is the natural ocean—how it mirrors the very heavens in its face! I have seen it with scarcely a ripple upon its surface. And I have seen it in a storm. But how different under these two aspects.

It seems scarcely the same ocean in a calm, and when the yeasty billows rage as though they would sweep away every thing before them. So is the flesh; at times as calm as a millpond, and at others lashed into angry waves by Satan, who, as the Prince of the power of the air, acts upon the heart of man as the wind acts upon the ocean, exciting it to madness and rebellion.

Then there is the World, a fast friend of the flesh, which does not act upon it as Satan does, to stir it up into waves of rebellion, but to seduce and draw it aside, encouraging every movement of it against God and toward evil. So what with the corrupt nature of the flesh in itself, and what with these firm friends, though deadly foes to God and godliness—Sin, Satan, and the World—how can we wonder that this flesh of ours is ever lusting against the spirit, and desiring every thing contrary to God and godliness in a believer's bosom; and if it cannot obtain its desires, yet exerts its whole power and influence to have its lusts gratified. Thus the flesh is continually lusting against the spirit. If the spirit, for instance, wants to repent, the flesh lusts against any and every feeling of contrition, brokenness, or sorrow on account of sin, by hardening and steeling the heart against it, or by suggesting self-justifying excuses. If the spirit wants to believe, the flesh lusts against faith by raising up unbelief, and stirring up doubts and questionings, with a whole host of infidel objections against the truth. If the spirit wants to love the Lord or his people, the flesh immediately opposes it by stirring up enmity and dislike. If the spirit wants to pray, the flesh lusts against it by distracting the soul with wandering thoughts and in manner of vile imaginations, so as to confuse the mind, and as if to drown out prayer with a flood of abominations. If the spirit would be meek, submissive, filled with holy thoughts and gracious affections, looking up to the Lord and seeking after fellowship with him, desiring his presence and manifested love; if it ever be seeking conformity to Christ's image, to know his will and do it, or to be spiritual and heavenly-minded, the flesh lusts with bitter hostility against these gracious actings of the spirit,

and shows its vile, earthly nature by interfering continually with every spiritual movement, damping the rising flame, pouring water upon it, and if it cannot quench it, endeavouring to mingle itself with it, so as to pollute it with its own stench and smoke. It is indeed impossible to describe the craft and subtlety by which the flesh manifests its deadly opposition to every thing spiritually good. The more spiritual the employments are, the more is this enmity and opposition manifested and for this reason, because the flesh instinctively knows that the great object of the Spirit is to crucify and mortify it. The flesh does not therefore dislike a natural, formal religion, which does not interfere with its lusts, but allows it its own will and way; but a religion which interferes with its lustings and actings, which curbs it, represses it, and will not suffer it to rule and reign, but crucifies it daily, the flesh cannot brook. It is like a man with a very bad temper: please him, he is all smiles; fret him, he is all frowns. Do the thing that he wants, he is the most agreeable man in the world; oppose him in the least degree, his very eyes flash fire. So with our flesh: gratify it, fondle it, please it, its face is clothed with smiles; not a wrinkle or a ruffle is seen on its countenance; though really dragging the soul to hell, it strews the path with flowers, and flatters its victim with heaven at the very moment that it hurls him over the precipice. But oppose it, mortify it, crucify it, contradict, subdue, and subjugate it, put a bit in its mouth, a saddle on its back, and plunge your spurs into its side, you will then find what the flesh is—as violent as the greatest termagant, as furious as a loosened madman, and as contradictory as a passionate drunkard.

iv. But I must not dwell entirely upon this point. There is the contrary side of the picture; for it would be sad indeed if there were in us nothing but this dreadful flesh, with these vile and furious lustings. Through infinite mercy, through rich, superabounding grace, the spirit lusteth against the flesh, as well as the flesh against the spirit. I have shewn you who are the friends and backers of the flesh in this battle; but, through mercy, the spirit has its friends

too, as well as the flesh, or it would come off very badly in this unceasing conflict; and very powerful friends too, for “greater is he that is for us than those that are against us.” We may say that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost—a triune God—is the friend of the spirit. But more especially fixing our eyes upon the Son of God as incarnate, we may view him as the especial friend of the spirit, for he is the sinner’s friend, and being the sinner’s friend, he will never let the poor child of God come off worst in this conflict. Left to itself, the spirit could not resist: it needs a divine influence upon it to teach its hands to war, and its fingers to fight. Abandoned to its own strength, the spirit must give way to the unceasing attacks of the enemy, for it is armed with all the powers of earth and hell. But the Lord comes to the rescue; the Son of God fights our battles; “for he girds his sword upon his thigh” (Psalm 45:3), and he rides forth “conquering and to conquer.” (Rev. 6:2.) But how does he come to the soul’s help? With the promises which he applies with power to support and uphold the fainting spirit; with the sweet manifestations of his Person, work, and love, which arm it with a power not its own; with the gracious influences of his presence, which put new life into it. Secretly and yet powerfully he strengthens, he supports, he encourages, he enables the spirit to carry on the warfare even unto death. The Holy Spirit, too, is especially tender of his own work upon the soul. He originally formed it; it is his own spiritual offspring; and as a mother watches over her babe, so the blessed Spirit watches over the spirit of his own creating. It is the counterpart of himself, for it is the spirit that he has raised up in the soul by his own almighty power. He, therefore, acts upon it, breathes into it fresh life and power, and communicates grace out of the inexhaustible fulness of the Son of God, thus enabling the spirit to breathe and act, struggle and fight against the flesh, so that the latter cannot have all its own way, but must submit and yield. For the spirit can fight as well as the flesh; can act as well as the flesh; and can desire good as well as the flesh can desire evil.

What a mercy for us it is that there are those heavenly breathings in our soul of the spirit against the flesh, cryings out to God against it; and that the Spirit within us thus takes hold of the arm of Omnipotence without us, seeks help from the Lord God Almighty, and by strength thus communicated fights against the flesh, and gains at times a most blessed victory over it. For what can the flesh do against the spirit when animated by divine power? What are sin, Satan, and the world when they have to oppose a Triune God in arms? This makes the victory sure, that our friends are stronger than our foes, and the work of God upon our soul greater than anything sin, Satan, or the world can bring against it. This made the apostle say, after he had been describing the inward conflict, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 7:25.) And when he had enumerated the opposition that the Christian had to endure on every side, he cries out, as if in holy triumph, “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” (Rom. 8:37.)

II.—But to pass on to our next point, the consequence of these two opposing principles is, that “ye cannot do the things that ye would.” These words are true in two senses. 1. First, you cannot do the evil things that ye would. The flesh is always lusting towards evil, but grace is a counteracting principle to repress and subdue it. It cannot, indeed, wholly overcome its lustings, but it can prevent those lustings being carried out into open action; for the spirit lusteth against the flesh, and will not let it altogether reign and rule, nor have unchecked its own will and way. What a mercy lies couched here! for what would be the consequence if the flesh had its full swing? What evil is there which you would not do; what crime which you would not commit; what slip which you would not make; what open and horrid fall which you would not be guilty of, except you were upheld by Almighty power, and the flesh curbed and checked from running its headlong course? So you cannot do the things that you would in the worst of all senses. You cannot utterly forsake or forget God, as the flesh would incline

you to do; you cannot deny or cease to call on the name of Christ, as the flesh would suggest; cannot live in sin, as the flesh would desire; nor can you give up all religion, nor abandon your hope, nor cast your faith to the winds, as the flesh would urge. The spirit in you, as influenced from above, prevents your doing the things that you naturally would by taking the side of God against the flesh, for it is armed with his authority, and is, as it were, his vicegerent in the soul. When, therefore, the flesh would burst forth into word or action, this vicegerent acts for God, and, like a magistrate or civil officer, speaks in his name, and in his authority thrusts back the malefactor. We can hardly tell at times how we are kept from evil; but it is almost always in obedience to the voice of this inward monitor. We can never praise God sufficiently for his restraining grace; for what should we be without it? What an unspeakable mercy, then, it is that you cannot be what you would be, nor act as you would act, nor speak what you would speak, nor do the things you would do, because there is in you who fear God a spiritual principle which holds you up, and keeps you back from the ways of sin and death in which the flesh would walk. How this spirit of grace and godly fear kept Joseph in the hour of temptation! How it preserved David when he had Saul in his power as he lay asleep in the cave! How it kept Nehemiah in the fear of God from extortion and oppression! (Neh. 5:15.) And how in thousands of instances it has preserved the feet of the saints, and kept them from doing things that would have ruined their reputation, blighted their character, brought reproach upon the cause of God, and the greatest grief and distress into their own conscience!

So also, in a higher and somewhat different sense, “ye cannot do the things that ye would.” You would be pure, holy, free from any working of sin; would believe without any doubt, love without any coldness, hope without any despondency, and serve God night and day without any disturbing hindrance. When you pray, you would have no distracting thought; when you read, you would do

so with light, life, and power; and when you hear, it would be with a blessing resting upon your soul. You would never be troubled with any vile imagination, infidel thought, or base suggestion; you would ever love the Lord and his people; have your affections ever fixed on heavenly things; be ever blessed with manifestations of Christ's love; and ever walk in peace with God and his people. But you cannot do the things that you would. And why? Because you are still in the flesh, and the flesh opposes everything which is spiritually good. Thus, in a good sense you cannot do the things that you would; and in a bad sense you cannot. Hence the conflict, a conflict that will never cease whilst we carry about with us a body of sin and death.

III.—But as time is running on, I must now come to our third point, which is, how we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; which is, by walking in the Spirit. Now observe that there is a difference between the flesh lusting against the spirit, and fulfilling its lusts. It is one thing to have the lusts of the flesh working in you; it is another thing to fulfil them, to be their slave and subject. But you may ask, “Can we be ever brought to that blessed spot where we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh?” Surely; nay more, we must be brought to it, if we are the saints of God. But you will say, How? Here it is then opened up by the finger of God before your eyes: “Walk in the Spirit.” It is not, then, by making the flesh any better, by forming resolutions and vows not to listen to its wiles, or be entangled in them, and so overcoming by our own strength the unruly movements of our carnal mind, that we can be preserved from fulfilling its lusts. The evil is of such a kind that if it is suppressed in one point it will break out in another. It is like some diseases in a man's body: keep the disease from breaking out, it will work within; keep it from working within, it will break without. So it is with the flesh: it will work in some shape or other, either within or without; either by fraud or force. Thus we cannot subdue the flesh by the flesh, any more than we can subdue disease by disease. You may take a tiger and shut him up in a den: but he is a

tiger still; pare his claws; still he has the tiger nature, and when his claws grow, and the den set wide open, he will use them as before. So it is with this flesh of ours: it is a chained tiger, but a tiger still. You cannot alter the tiger nature, though you pare its claws and though you draw its teeth. But how are you to be kept from walking in the lusts of the flesh, how are you to be enabled to live to the praise and glory of God, and to do those things which are pleasing in his sight? The answer is still the same: By walking in the Spirit. But what is it to walk in the Spirit? To have the Spirit of God given to us in large measure, so as to live under his influence, and to walk in the feeling possession of his power and his grace; to be baptised into the very spirit of the gospel; for the Holy Spirit to make our body his temple; and to live, and speak, and think and act as blessed with the enjoyment of his divine teachings, operations, and communications. If we walk in the flesh, we shall fulfil the lusts of the flesh; but if we walk in the Spirit, have our affections fixed upon heavenly things, are spiritually minded, have fellowship with the Son of God, enjoy his presence, live to his praise, and have him formed in our hearts the hope of glory; if we thus walk in the Spirit, then we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, for the flesh will be subdued by the Spirit, and its lusts subjugated by his divine influence and efficacious power.

IV.—Now comes our last point, which is the blessed and most encouraging conclusion, drawn from the Spirit's work upon the heart: that if we are thus led by the Spirit by walking in him; if he be our Guide and Teacher; if he be continually operating upon our heart, and bringing near the influence of his grace; if he be in its and with us, guiding us into all truth, making and keeping us believing, loving, prayerful, tender, watchful, humble, contrite, and sincere: if we are thus led by the Spirit, we are not then under the law. Now whilst the conflict is going on in your bosom, you are often in your feelings under the law. The law's curse is ringing in your ears, the law's condemnation piercing your conscience. The flesh in some unguarded moment, it may be, prevails: you

are entangled in some evil; you slip and fall into something which brings guilt upon your conscience. Now the law thunders; inward condemnation re-echoes its peals; and the soul falls into bondage, doubt, and fear. But if you are led by the Spirit; if that blessed Guide is pleased to lead you out of your self into Christ's blood and righteousness; if you are experimentally favoured with his blessed teachings and sweet influences, bringing with them light, life, liberty, and love, the law has no more curse for you; it cannot condemn you to hell, nor send your soul to lie for ever under the curse of God. For being led by the Spirit you are delivered from the curse of the law into the blessing of the gospel; from the bondage of the law into the liberty of truth; from law charges into gospel mercies; from the accusations of a guilty conscience, into the witness of a good, because a purged and sprinkled conscience; and to sum it all up in one sentence, are thus translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. O the blessedness of walking in the Spirit, and being led by the Spirit!

If, on the contrary, you are continually under the dominion of the flesh, yield to every vain or sensual movement, give way to every carnal inclination, then you bring yourself into doubt and darkness, bondage and fear. The law condemns and holds its fiery scourge over your shoulders. But if the Lord is pleased to bring your soul into the sweet liberty of the gospel, and baptise you into the love of Christ, then you are not under the law to condemn and curse you, but under the gospel to save and bless you. And this will not only save but sanctify you, for as you walk under the influence of the blessed Spirit, you will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; you will have power to subdue them, and walk before God in the light of his countenance. I do not say that we are always or indeed often here; but I am sure there is no real peace or happiness except as we know some measure of these things in vital experience.

Thus, in the words of the text, we have not only the conflict described, but the victory also. We are not left by it wounded and maimed in the field of conflict, doubting whether we shall come

off conquerors; not left in uncertainty whether it will be a drawn battle, or whether sin, Satan, and the world shall overcome the grace of God. But we have the blessed testimony of God himself, that if led by the Spirit, we are not under the law, but under the saving blessings of the gospel. O blessed spot, to walk in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free! Not to be entangled in the yoke of bondage; but to know the truth and feel its sweet influence and power in our heart, bringing us out of the condemnation of a fiery law, and setting our souls down in blessed liberty at the feet of Jesus, in the sweet enjoyment of the blessed gospel of the grace of God, and thus divinely furnished to every good word and work.

176 Spiritual Paradoxes

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning,

Nov. 25, 1860

“As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

2 Cor. 6:9, 10

What a portrait does the apostle draw in this chapter of a servant of Jesus Christ! What a description does he give of a true ambassador of God to the souls of men! We see sometimes portraits of distinguished characters, or read descriptions of their features, manners, dress, and appearance; and these are often so correct that were we thrown into their company, we should at once recognise them from their resemblance to what we have thus seen and read of them, though they themselves were previously personally unknown to us. Now if we were to take through the length and breadth of the land this portrait

of a Christian minister, this description of a servant of God, as delineated by Paul in the chapter before us, and examine by this portrait and by this description all or any who call themselves ministers of Christ and servants of God, how many, think you, should we find to correspond with, I will not say the whole, but even a good part of the character and description here given? Not to press it too closely, take but two verses as merely a part of the whole description, distinct from our text which furnishes another portion: “By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.” (2 Cor. 6:6, 7.) Now who can say that we have any lack of professed servants of Jesus Christ and ministers of the gospel in this country? We may safely assume that in this or that town there are six men in or out of the National Establishment who call themselves servants of God and ministers of Jesus Christ; or, to bring it to a narrower point, let us suppose that in this or that village there is but one resident clergyman who shall consider himself, as many we know do, alone commissioned to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments. Assume also a circumstance by no means uncommon, that, strong in his episcopal ordination and legal title, he should denominate and denounce all other unordained preachers who may come within the bounds of his parish schismatics. Surely, with such firm and strongly asserted claims to be an ambassador of God, he could not reasonably object to a comparison with the portrait and description given of one by an inspired apostle, especially as he says, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ;” and, “But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God.” How far he could stand such a test the great day must decide.

But you will perhaps say, “Look at home. Never mind other men. How do your own credentials stand? Where and what are you when compared with Paul's portrait and description of a minister of God and a servant of Jesus Christ?” In reply to your

question, I hope that the Lord has given me both inward and outward testimonies that I am one though the least and last of his servants; but I frankly confess, when I compare myself with this description, and examine my features by this picture, I shrink into insignificance, and feel to come so deplorably short of the character and description of a minister of Christ as drawn by the pen of Paul, that I seem utterly unworthy of the name. But you will say, "If this be the case, why do you choose such a text as this? Why don't you take less lofty ground and find some lower standard?" I might ask, by way of answer, when a schoolmaster is teaching a boy to write, why does he set before him a perfect copy slip? Or when a pupil is learning to engrave, or to draw, or to chisel, why is he furnished by his teacher with the best models? Because he knows there is no other way whereby he can learn to write, or engrave, or draw, or make a statue properly. If you set before him bad copy slips he will never write a good hand, for he will naturally follow the pattern placed before him; and so if you give him faulty models, he will never attain to any degree of excellency as an artist or a sculptor. These perfect models show him also his own deficiencies, and thus not only teach him what true excellence is, but make and keep him humble by giving him to see and feel how far he is from it.

But the words of the apostle are not only descriptive of a Christian minister, but also of a Christian people; for the experience of a servant of God in almost every point except that of the ministry does not differ from theirs, nor does he walk in a different path from them. His is the same faith, his the same hope, his the same love, his the same trials, his the same consolations; so that though the words of our text do in the first instance specially apply to the servants of Christ, yet they are so comprehensive as to take in, not them only, but every one in whose heart God is working by his Holy Spirit. Were it not so, why should I preach from the words this morning? You are not a congregation of preachers, but simple hearers of the gospel. If therefore the text

has no bearing upon you, why should I attempt to speak from it this day? But it is as much a description of the experience of a private Christian as of a minister of Christ: and so I think you will find it, if I am enabled to lay bare its spiritual and experimental meaning.

But when in this spirit we come to look at it a little more closely, we may well call our text a chain of paradoxes. And observe how each spiritual paradox is fastened together by a double link. In seeking therefore this morning to unwind this chain, I shall take up these double links in the order in which they present themselves to my hand.

"As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

1.—Let us look, first, at the double link that presents itself in the very opening of our text: "As unknown and yet well known."

i. This is true in a literal sense. God's people, as well as God's servants, are little known and less esteemed in this world. It is God's purpose and a part of his infinite wisdom that it should be so. The Lord is training up heirs of an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and preparing them for those mansions of holiness and bliss which he has prepared for them before the foundation of the world. But whilst they are here below they are in a state of obscurity. We may compare them to a large and valuable diamond, which is now undergoing the operations of cutting and polishing in some obscure court in the city, no one scarcely knowing of its existence or value but its owner and the jeweller who is patiently cutting it into shape. But one day it may adorn a monarch's crown. So whilst God is cutting and polishing his diamonds by trials and temptations, sufferings and afflictions, they are hidden from the eyes of men, many of them literally and actually in obscure alleys and courts, in garrets and alms-houses; but when the Lord maketh up his jewels, they will shine forth for ever in the mediatorial

crown. God has chosen the poor of this world for the most part to be rich in faith. Not many notable in the annals of learning, power, or rank; not many noble, not many rich, not many mighty, has he called by his grace to a knowledge of himself. The Lord's people rarely possess any wealth, station, property, or worldly distinction. They are for the most part poor and despised, as their Lord and Master was before them, and such the world cares neither to know nor notice.

But not only in a literal sense are the saints and servants of God unknown to the men of this world, but they are spiritually unknown. What does the world know of their sorrows, their distress of conscience, the bitterness they feel under the application of a broken law, under the hidings of God's face, under the cruel temptations of Satan, under the misgivings and fears, the doubts and exercises, by which they are so cast down? And what does it know of their joys and consolations, deliverances and manifestations; the sweet discoveries of the blood and grace of Christ to their heart; the love of God shed abroad in their soul, and the inward witness of the Spirit to their spirit that they are God's children? As they are unknown in their sorrows, they are unknown in their joys; for their joy is that which a stranger intermeddled not with. What does the world know of their doubts and fears; of their misgivings and apprehensions whether the work upon their hearts be genuine, whether they have an interest in the finished work of the Son of God, whether what they have experienced has been wrought in their soul by a divine power? What does the world know of their earnest and prayerful desires after God and their seeking after his presence and favour; of what they feel and enjoy in hearing their experience described by a servant of God, and the testimony thereby afforded to the reality of the work upon their heart? What does the world know of the breaking in of the light of the Lord's countenance, and the sweet springing up of a good hope through grace? What does the world know of their temptations to disbelieve and question every sacred truth, or what they experience under the fiery darts

of Satan, stirring up every base and bad feeling in their wretched hearts? Or what does the world know of their deliverance from these temptations, the support they receive under them, and the way in which the Lord makes them work for their spiritual good? Look at the dying believer: what does the world know of the sweet consolation which that dying believer is experiencing in the very agony of death? What does it see of the glorious vision of an eternal crown which the Holy Ghost anoints his dying eyes to behold as eternally his? What does it see of the choir of angels surrounding his bed, and how they are waiting to waft his soul to heaven?

ii. But if "unknown," yet—and here is the paradox—they are well known.

1. They are well known to God the Father, for he knew them with the foreknowledge of approbation when he chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world. We therefore read "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Pet. 1:2); and "whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate." (Rom. 8:29.)

But God the Father knoweth them also in time as well as eternity; for he "knoweth the way of the righteous." He knows therefore every thought of their heart, every word of their lip, every action of their hands. He knows too all their wants, with every desire that springs up in their mind, every secret cry and inward groan, every feeling of contrition, brokenness, repentance, and humility; all their self-abasement and self-loathing on account of sin, with all their confessions and supplications before the throne of grace. He knows too the faith that he himself gives them to lay hold of the Son of his love; the hope he inspires in his mercy, the love he sheds abroad to his name. These things are not concealed from the eye of God, who searches all hearts, and before whom every secret lies naked and bare. How beautifully is all this expressed in Psalm 139: "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and my uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue,

but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.” (Psal. 139:1-5.)

2. Nor are they unknown to the Lord Jesus Christ; for “the Lord knoweth them that are his.” And does he not say “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine?” And again, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” They often do not know themselves, for the work of grace is obscured by the darkness of their minds and the unbelief of their hearts. But he can distinguish his own work, not only from any base imitation of it, but in the depths of its obscurity. He can see sincerity, uprightness, godly fear at work in the hearts of his people, though they may be tempted to think there is nothing in them but insincerity and hypocrisy. The Lord can discern his own work and his own grace, however weak, feeble, or disputed; and therefore however low his people may sink, he knows all their sinkings and all their risings, all their temptations and all their afflictions; and not only so, but he is able to stretch forth his hand to give support under them and deliver out of them.

3. And they are well known to the Holy Ghost, who began the work of grace upon their heart, who is poured out upon them and abides in them as a Spirit of grace and of supplications, who helps their infirmities, teaches them how to pray and what to pray for, and intercedes in them and for them with groanings which cannot be uttered. He knows when and what promises to apply to their hearts, and how to comfort them in their afflictions, to reveal Christ to them, and form him in them the hope of glory.

4. And they are well known by each other, even when they are not known to each other; for they are taught by the same Spirit, led into the same faith, have the same sorrows and the same joys, can speak the same language, are walking in the same path of tribulation, and are looking forward to the same heavenly crown.

5. Ministers of Christ also are in another sense, “though unknown, yet well known.” There is spread through this country a people little known and observed by the world, but who are in

close union with each other; and by this people the real servants of Christ are well known and highly esteemed. Being taught by the same Spirit, there is a fellow feeling in the saints of God, uniting them to each other and to the servants of God, and kindling in the bosom love and affection to those whom they only know by their writings, or their general acceptability to the living members of the mystical body of Christ.

II.—But now we come to another double link, equally mysterious, equally paradoxical, yet equally susceptible of a gracious interpretation: “As dying, and, behold, we live.”

i. This is true literally. Many of the Lord’s people are dying the greater part of their lives, and yet live till their work is done. It is just thirty years ago since I was first laid aside from the work of the ministry by a severe and protracted illness, mainly brought on I believe by hard labour; for I was then in the Church of England, and like most zealous young men worked hard in my parish, preaching, lecturing, and visiting the poor, beyond my bodily strength. But by that illness I was so prostrated, that I scarcely got over it for several years, and indeed have never fully recovered from it to this day. Thus in a sense I have been dying these last thirty years, and yet I live, and shall live until my work is done. And yet a great deal of work since then I have done both with tongue and pen, for I have an active mind in a weak body, and hate idleness whether in myself or others.

But look at the words in a spiritual sense. How true it is that the Lord’s people are always dying. How they die for instance under the law. When Moses comes with the application of the fiery law, it burns up all the dross and tin of their self-righteousness. How they sink under the feeling sense of the wrath of God, so as sometimes to have scarcely any more hope of being saved than those at this moment in hell! How they die under this killing sentence of a fiery law to their own righteousness: how they die to their own strength and wisdom and every creature hope: and how they die to any expectations of being saved by the works of the flesh or by any

obedience the creature can pay! And not only once or twice do they thus die, but they are always dying. Continual discoveries of the majesty of God, of his holiness and purity, with a daily sense of their own sinfulness, weakness, helplessness, and inability to deliver their own souls—all these things working in them, make them in a spiritual sense to be dying every day. As the apostle speaks of himself, “I die daily.” Thus they die to all hope of salvation by the works of the law, die to all idea of strength as wrought by an arm of flesh, die to any expectation of happiness in this world, any prospect of creature enjoyment, or any fancied paradise of earthly pleasure. They carry, too, about with them more or less a daily sense of their mortality, often meditate upon their latter end, and feel that the time must shortly come when the scythe of death will cut them down, and lay their body in the grave.

ii. But though they thus die, yet they live. When the law first arrested you with its tremendous curse, and brought the sentence of death into your conscience, it was not to kill you outright, but to make you alive unto God. It was a sentence of death in itself, but it was a living Spirit who applied it. So dying under the law, yet that you were quickened into divine life, was made manifest. To cry and sigh for mercy, to groan for pardon, to be favoured with a spirit of prayer and supplication, and with wrestlings and beseechings to God for mercy,—are not these evidences that there was life even in death? When God strikes with fiery displeasure a reprobate, it is like Joab striking Amasa: he strikes not again: he needs not to “double his stroke,” as the margin reads. (2 Sam. 20:10.) When God struck Saul and Judas, he did not strike them twice. I was reading the other day an instance in the life of godly Mr. Welch, one of the old Scotch Covenanters. He was entertaining some company with godly conversation and amongst those present was a profane youth, who openly mocked, sneered, and ridiculed what he said upon the solemn matters of eternity. The godly man paused a moment, looked at him, and said aloud, “Behold the judgment of God.” In a moment the profane youth

fell dead under the table. He died at once under the manifested wrath of God. No second stroke was needed; down came the sword of justice and cleft him asunder before the frightened guests. Have you not sometimes feared lest you might so die too, an awful monument of the just displeasure of the Almighty? But the Lord did not so deal with you. He smote you with his rod, not with his sword. He smote you not that you should die under his frown, but that you might repent and live. “By these things men live,” said the afflicted king Hezekiah, “and in all these things is the life of my spirit.” (Isai. 38:16.)

But not only in the first dealings of God with the soul, but all through the godly man’s experience he is ever dying, yet behold a mystery—he is ever living. At this time of the year the trees for the most part drop their leaves; but do the trees die? They are rather preparing themselves for a spring suit; and when the warm days of April and May return, those dead branches will reclothe themselves with foliage. So it is with the soul. Your faith may seem almost gone, your hope to be removed, and your love to drop out of your soul as the leaves drop from a tree in autumn; but behold, you live. There is life in the root, life in the stem. Look at the vine at this time of the year, especially if it has undergone a sharp pruning: the grapes all gone, the leaves dropped off, the branches apparently dead; but when the spring returns there will be a revival. So it is with you. Like the vine, you may have dropped the leaf, or the sharp pruning knife of affliction may have cut into the branch; but in due time you will again put forth leaves and flowers and fruit. Is not this Scripture language and a Scripture figure? My figures are sometimes objected to as natural, not Scriptural comparisons; but this time I will not so offend the critical ear. What says the prophet? “But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.” (Isai. 6:13.) Thus, though the teil tree and the oak cast their leaves, yet the holy seed is in them—in “stock and stem” (margin), and

this gives them an enduring substance and a future revival.

Thus, though we die and die daily, yet behold, we live; and in a sense, the more we die, the more we live. The more we die to self, the more we die to sin; the more we die to pride and self-righteousness, the more we die to creature strength; and the more we thus die to nature, the more we live to grace. And this runs all the way through the life and experience of a Christian. Nature must die that grace may live. The weeds must be plucked up that the crop may grow; the flesh be starved that the spirit may be fed; the old man put off that the new man may be put on; the deeds of the body be mortified that the soul may live unto God. As then we die, we live. The more we die to our own strength, the more we live to Christ's strength; the more we die to creature hope, the more we live to a good hope through grace; the more we die to our own righteousness, the more we live to Christ's righteousness; and the more we die to the world, the more we live to and for heaven. This is the grand mystery, that the Christian is always dying, yet always living; and the more he dies, the more he lives. The death of the flesh is the life of the spirit; the death of sin is the life of righteousness; and the death of the creature is the very life of God in the soul.

III.—But let us pass on to our next double link; for these paradoxes are most blessedly linked together, and each one strengthens and confirms the other: "As chastened, and not killed."

Chastisement is part of the covenant: that is God's own declaration of it in Psalm 89: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David." (Psalm 89:30-35.) And is not this New Testament language too? How striking, how decisive are the

words of the apostle: "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children: My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If we endure chastening, God dealeth with us as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." (Heb. 12:5-8.) There are men in our day who deny chastisement; who would take the rod out of God's hands, and boldly teach that the Lord never chastens his people. All I can say of them is, that they proclaim their own bastardy. They say with a loud voice to the world, "whatever others are, we are illegitimate." Now a man must be dead to shame to make such a proclamation. A person told me some years ago that she heard a well-known London preacher thus open his sermon, "I am a bastard!" Methinks he need not have thus openly revealed his mother's sin and shame, or made a sport for the profane. But what he was bold enough to proclaim of himself literally these men proclaim of themselves spiritually, when they say, "The rod of God never has been, and never will be upon me." Can they not see, that in denying the chastening hand of God, they deny that they are the children of God? But all the Lord's people know by their own experience that he is a chastening God, for they have often felt the rod upon their own back.

i. But what are these chastenings?

1. Some of them are bodily. We find this spoken of by Elihu in the book of Job, where, describing the way in which God sometimes deals with his people, he says, "He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out." (Job 33:19-21.) This is a description of God's chastening the body. A large share have I had of that rod from God's hand, and in a measure am experiencing it now. But

the Lord does not see fit to lay the same chastisements upon all his people. He has rods of different sizes and different descriptions; though all are felt to be rods when God brings them upon the back.

2. There are family afflictions which the Lord sometimes makes use of as chastening rods. Such are bereavements of those near and dear in the prime of life, just when they seem most needed, as the husband to sustain the scantily provided wife, the father to bring up the children, the mother to nurse the new-born babe. Few are there who have families who have not tasted the bitter as well as the sweet. And children can be made rods as well as comforts, as Isaac, Jacob, Eli, and David found to their grief and sorrow.

3. Providential trials are sometimes twigs of this chastising rod. Heavy losses in business, unexpected and unavoidable calls on a small income, entanglements through the default or dishonesty of others, perhaps children or relations, a worn out farm, a sinking shop, long doctor's bills—these are some of the deep trials of the middle classes, as hard to bear as loss of work and wages to the day-labourer. Attending these, as helping on the calamity, there fly about painful misgivings as to the future, dark clouds lowering over the mind, with many dismal apprehensions what the result may be to one's self and those dearer than self—the wife and family. Who shall say that the Lord does not make use of these providential trials and afflictions sometimes as a chastening rod?

But for the most part these chastenings are of an inward and spiritual nature. Hidings of his face, frowns of his brow, reproofs administered in the conscience, denials of answer to prayer, secret rebukes, letting the soul hang in doubt which way the scale will turn, so that it trembles before his terrible Majesty,—in these and other ways the Lord chastises many of his dear family, that they may be partakers of his holiness.

ii. But though “chastened” by these afflictions, they are “not

killed.” The Lord chastises with one hand and upholds with the other. You may have passed in your spiritual experience under many chastising strokes; and when they fell upon you, they seemed to come as a killing sentence from God's lips. Your illness, you feared, might end in death; under your bereavement, you felt as if you never could hold up your head again; your providential losses you apprehended might prove your earthly ruin; your family afflictions seemed to be so heavy as to be radically incurable; the hidings of God's face so great that he never would look upon you with love again; the rebukes and reproofs of his voice so cutting that you felt as if he would never apply a promise to your soul any more. These were in your feelings killing strokes; but though chastened you were not killed. You lost no divine life thereby; but you lost much that pleased the flesh, much that gratified the creature, much that looked well for days of prosperity, but would not abide a storm. But you lost nothing that was for your real good. If you lost bodily health, you gained spiritual health; if you lost a dear husband or child, God filled up the void in your heart by making Christ more precious; if you had troubles in your family, the Lord made it up by giving more manifestations of his love and grace. Your very losses in providence were for your good, for he either made them up, or what you lost in providence he doubled in grace. So that though chastened, you are not killed. Is not your hope still alive? Does not the holy flame that God kindled in your bosom still burn, though it may burn dimly? Has anything that has happened to you in providence or in grace quenched, extinguished for ever the life of God in your soul? Has it not rather brought it out more clearly? As the dross and tin were more separated, has not the gold shone more brightly? Have you not held spiritual things with a tighter grasp? When God chastens his people, it is not to kill them: it is to make them partakers of his holiness; it is to revive their drooping graces, to make them more sincere and upright and tender in conscience, to become more separate from the world, to seek more his glory, to have a more single eye to his praise, and to live more a life of

faith upon the Son of God. Here is the blessedness, that when God chastises his people, it is not for their injury, but for their profit; not for their destruction, but for their salvation; not to treat them with the unkindness of an enemy, but with the love of a friend. Look at the afflictions, chastenings, grievous sorrows, and exercises that you have passed through. Have they been friends to you or enemies; instruments of helping you, or hindrances; ladders whereby you have climbed up to heaven, or steps whereby you have descended into hell; means of taking you near to Christ, or means of carrying you more into the spirit of the world? If you know anything of God's chastening, you will say, "Every stroke has brought me nearer to God; he has flogged me home." As a mother will seize her truant boy out of a mob of other children and flog him home, so the Lord sometimes flogs his children home; every stroke laid upon their back bringing them a step nearer to their home in the mansions above. In your own experience, therefore, without my teaching or explanation, you can set to your seal that God's chastenings have not killed you, but rather they have been the means of reviving and keeping alive the work of grace upon your heart.

IV.—But we now take hold of the next double link: "As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing."

Many of the Lord's people are stamped with a sorrowful spirit; and had we a deeper sense of what this world is, and what we are as dying sinners in it, we should have more of a sorrowful spirit amongst us than we have. The world may dance, as it were, upon the very brink of hell; but the saint of God has much to make him sorrowful, for he feels himself to be a sinner in a sinful world, far from happiness and home. For the most part his path in providence is one of sorrow; and his very social cup is often embittered by many painful ingredients, for the Lord knows what our carnal mind is—that we should drink the cup of this life with gall and wormwood in it. But as regards spiritual things, how many causes there are that the Christian should be of a

sorrowful spirit. When he looks at his blessed Lord, who was a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," he sees an example to which he has to be conformed. We read that Jesus wept (John 11); we never read that Jesus laughed or even smiled. We read of his sighing and groaning in spirit (Mark 7:34; John 11:33), and that he "rejoiced in spirit." (Luke 10:21.) But he who "bore our sins in his own body on the tree" hath also "borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." (Isai. 53:4.) Now we have to be conformed to this suffering image of the Lord Jesus; for we must "suffer with him if we are to be glorified together." (Rom. 8:17.) And the promise is sure: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." (2 Tim. 2:12.) This made the apostle say, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Rom. 8:18.) And abundant cause there is for sorrow of heart. O if we could view by the eyes of faith how God looks down upon the world—what a scene of wickedness and abomination it is in his holy and pure eyes, we should carry about with us more of that sorrowful spirit which our blessed Lord so signally displayed. Can we wonder that the Lord Jesus was grieved for the hardness of men's hearts (Mark 3:5); or that his holy soul was pained within him at the continual spectacle of sin and woe? A similar feeling will be in our breasts, if we are in any way imbued with the same spirit. If righteous Lot, dwelling among the wicked, in seeing and hearing vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds (2 Pet. 2:8), should not we feel a measure of the same inward vexation with the filthy conversation of the wicked?

2. When, too, we turn from looking at others to look at ourselves, what fresh and additional reason we have to be sorrowful before God. Our shortcomings, our numerous slips and falls, our grievous backslidings, our little living to God's praise, our doing so little the things which are pleasing in his sight, our crooked tempers, vile imaginations, foolish words, vain thoughts, and many inconsistencies,—were these laid with any weight and power

upon our conscience, they would make us sorrowful indeed, and force us often to smite upon our breast and cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

3. To enjoy so few visits from Jesus, to know so little of his dying love, to walk so little in his holy, humble, self-denying footsteps, to have our affections so little fixed upon things above,—if these things were laid upon our conscience with greater weight and power, they would make us also of a sorrowful spirit.

4. To see how few there are who are walking in the straight and narrow way; to behold how many even of those who name the name of Christ do not depart from iniquity; to view how thousands round about us are filling up the measure of their iniquities, and upon whom the wrath of God will speedily fall; to feel how the name of God is openly blasphemed and abused, his mercies in providence disregarded, his truth hated and reviled, his people contemned and despised; to think how little professors of the truths of the gospel generally adorn the doctrine by a godly life; how little fruit is borne by the church and congregation where the word of life has been preached for years; what strifes and divisions there are in all our churches; what abounding errors in many who have sat half their life-time under the sound of the gospel truth; and how little the Lord Jesus Christ is admired, loved, and honoured in this world by those who call themselves Christians, as if they were true followers of him,—if we carried about with us a deep and daily sense of these things we might well be sorrowful; for there is everything in self and in others, in the world and in the church, to make us of a sorrowful spirit before God. The apostle said of himself, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart." (Rom. 9:1, 2.) Now what was the cause of this sorrow? It was for "his brethren, his kinsmen, according to the flesh," as seeing the hardness and unbelief of their hearts; and how again he says, "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye

might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you." (2 Cor. 2:4.) Thus where there is love to the Lord, a zeal for his glory, and affection to his people, there will be continual occasion for sorrow of heart.

ii. And yet here again we have a spiritual paradox, that is, an apparent, but not real contradiction. The word "paradox" means literally "something contrary to expectation;" and does not this definition agree with all the spiritual paradoxes which we have been explaining? Thus the apostle says of himself, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Is not this a paradox—a thing contrary to expectation; what we never could have supposed probable or possible? For is it not a manifest contradiction that the same man should be ever sorrowful, yet be always rejoicing? It is as if the rejoicing bride and the mourning widow were one and the same person. But what is a contradiction in nature is not a contradiction in grace. Let us seek then to solve the mystery, to open and unfold the paradox. And this we shall best do by setting before our eyes the Lord Jesus Christ. For in what or in whom are we to rejoice but in him? This made the apostle say, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." And do observe how he gives rejoicing in Christ Jesus as a mark of true circumcision. "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." (Phil. 3:3.) If we rejoice, then, it is not in ourselves, for the more we see of ourselves, the more cause we shall have for sorrow; not in our own strength, or wisdom, or righteousness, for I have already shown you that to all these things we have to die; and how can we rejoice in a thing of death? But if we rejoice it must be in the Lord Jesus, and what he is made of God unto us—"Wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." When, too, we are favoured with the visitations of his presence, we may rejoice in hope of eternal life; in a conscience made honest and tender in God's fear, and purged by the blood of sprinkling from filth, guilt, and dead works; in the promises as they are applied with power to the soul; in fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus

Christ; in the views of rest and peace beyond the grave in that happy land where tears are wiped from off all faces, and the very names of sin and sorrow are unknown. Thus though the Christian in himself is sorrowful, and has reason to be so all the day long, yet so far as he has any views by faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, any good hope through grace, or any manifestation of his Person, work, blood, and love, he may be always rejoicing. Nay his very sorrow opens up a way for joy. There is no room in a worldly heart for spiritual joy, for the Lord gives joy in sorrow. When the heart is sunk in gloom and fear, and doubt and distress take possession of the mind, when family afflictions, or painful bereavements, or trying circumstances, fill the heart with grief and dismay, that is the very time for the Lord to pour joy into the soul. As afflictions abound, so do consolations. Sorrow and joy are linked together as night and day, as sun and moon, as heaven and earth. Without sorrow, there can be no joy, for joy is its counterpoise. If you had everything your heart could desire, what room would there be for spiritual joy? But when all sources of earthly joy dry up, and there is nothing but sorrow and trouble before you in this world, as long as life remains; when you are afflicted in body, poor in circumstances, tried in your family, distressed in your mind, and there is nothing but grief and misery, then you have room as it were made in your heart to receive the sweet consolations of God's grace. Thus, so far from sorrow and joy being inconsistent with, or destructive of each other, whatever may be the case naturally, we may say that spiritually, one is needful, nay, indispensable to the other; for if there is no sorrow, there can be no joy. Nay, the more sorrow, the more joy: spiritual sorrow killing all earthly joy, and yet opening up a way for spiritual joy to come in. And is not this the very meaning and language of the apostle, where he says, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves

are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ?" (2 Cor. 1:3, 4, 5.) So again he says, "Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you; I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation." (2 Cor. 7:4.) Well then may we call these divine realities spiritual paradoxes: I say spiritual, because they are heavenly mysteries, and as such among the things which God has hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. (Matt. 11:25.) If then you have not the key, you cannot open this cabinet; if you have not the solution, you cannot decipher this riddle. But if you have the teaching of the Spirit, and understand anything of these divine mysteries by divine teaching, you will understand what it is to be "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

V.—I now pass to another spiritual paradox: "As poor, yet making many rich."

I. This paradox is especially applicable to the servants of God, many of whom, by far the great majority, are very poor in worldly circumstances. And the Lord sees fit it should be so, to make them more dependent upon himself in providence. Few men, very few, are fit to be trusted with money; for there is a tendency in the possession of property to lift up the mind, and make it, so to speak, independent of God. But all rules have their exceptions, and so it may be in this instance. But if all the servants of God are not poor in worldly circumstances, they are all poor, or at least should be so in spirit. He that is rich in his own eyes is not fit to speak to those who are poor in their own eyes. The rich man naturally has no sympathy with the poor man. A merchant upon 'Change with a hundred thousand pounds in his pocket has no sympathy with a bankrupt. A man sitting down to every delicacy and the choicest wines, has no sympathy with a beggar shivering with cold and hunger in the street. So if a minister has not been made poor in his own soul, he will not be much of a preacher to those who have been made poor in spirit. He that would bring forth the riches of the gospel must be made poor in soul, if not made poor in

pocket—made poor in spirit, if not poor in substance.

But you may extend, as I have done before, the paradox to include others besides the servants of Christ. The saints of God then are made poor, as well as the servants of God, nor is there a feature more general, more descriptive, or more characteristic of the family of God than poverty—I mean spiritual poverty. Were I to speak of great manifestations and deliverances, I might be shooting over some of your heads; but coming down to poverty and necessity, there I meet your case. If the Lord has but touched your heart with his finger, brought you down and laid you low at his feet, I shall meet you upon that ground, because he has stripped you or is stripping you of all creature sufficiency. Thus poverty of spirit is a feature common to every saint of God. How did the Lord open his ministry in the sermon upon the Mount? “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” If, therefore, you have no poverty of spirit, you have no kingdom as your inheritance; and recollect that we must enter into the kingdom of heaven upon earth, for it is “within us;” so that if you are not partakers of the kingdom of grace below you will not inherit the kingdom of glory above. But as I have spoken so much before on the same point and to the same effect under my preceding heads, I shall pass on to the second link of the paradox.

ii. And surely this is a paradox of paradoxes, a mystery of mysteries, that a poor man can make many rich.

If I were to walk out some day and find out upon examination that the stone quarries near this town concealed a gold mine, how many thousands would be glad to listen to such intelligence, and what a rush there would be if I could assure them that under a certain stone in a certain quarry there was a vein of gold. Tomorrow would not pass without thousands flocking to pick it up. But tell them of the glorious riches of Christ, of the treasures of grace and glory which are hidden in the Person and work, blood and righteousness of an incarnate God, where is the heart to listen to that tale? Where is the hand stretched out to dig into

that vein “which no fowl knoweth and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen?” And why is this but because there is no desire for the wealth which makes the soul rich for eternity. But what a view had the apostle of these riches when he said, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” (Eph. 3:8.) How remarkable the words, “The unsearchable riches of Christ.” So he speaks also in another epistle: “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27); and again, “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Col. 2:3.) How low, how poor are all earthly riches compared with these heavenly treasures of which the Lord himself said, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” (Matt. 6:19, 20.)

But let us now see how the servants of God though poor yet make many rich. It is because God uses them as the means of conveying his kingdom into many a sinner’s heart: and to make any rich for eternity is the greatest wealth God can bestow through the instrumentality of man. If the Lord has blessed my testimony to any of your consciences, I have done more for you than if I had given you a thousand pounds. You have more reason to bless God than if I could at this moment put a bag of gold into your hand; for that money might soon be spent. It would make you comfortable for a short space; but where would it be and of what value would you find it when death knocked at your door? But to be put into possession of a kingdom which cannot be moved, to be favoured and blessed with a knowledge of the eternal salvation of your soul, and to find in a dying hour the peace of God in your heart, what language can express the value of a treasure like this? And yet God’s servants, though poor, most of them literally and all of them

spiritually, have this wonderful privilege committed to them that they make many rich. O how many a dying saint has blessed God for the ministry of the gospel; and how he can look back upon times and seasons when the preached word communicated to his soul that heavenly treasure of life, light, and power which is his support in the very arms of death. What an honour then is this which God confers upon his servants, that he enables them to enrich the souls of his people by instrumentally conveying into their heart the riches which are stored up in Christ Jesus. This, however, they can only do by preaching free grace, by holding up before the eyes of the people the Lord of life and glory as the only object of faith, hope, and love, by proclaiming the blood of the cross as the only way of pardon and peace, by tracing out the work of grace upon the heart as a means of encouraging the cast down and distressed, and setting before them salvation as the free gift of God. When, then, the poor and needy receive these glorious tidings into their heart under the power and unction of the blessed Spirit, and feel a sweet conviction of their interest in these heavenly realities, then are they made rich indeed. You who have been so blessed need not envy the wealthiest peer who ever walked before the Queen in a robe of ermine and with a coronet in his hand: you need not envy the King of Italy with his newly acquired kingdom, nor the Emperor of the French at the head of his armies, if God has put his fear into your heart and blessed you with a living faith in his dear Son; for all these earthly pageants will sooner or later come to a close. I am not speaking, I would have you observe, against kings and queens, rank and station, for all these things are necessary in a time state, and it is only the “presumptuous and self-willed” who “despise government and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.” (2 Pet. 2:10.) I bless God that we have in this country a gradation of ranks and stations, and that society is linked together from the Queen on the throne to the ploughman in the field. But what is good for time is of no avail for eternity. Thus all earthly dignity, wealth, rank, and power

pass away, like a pageant moving over a stage: but those who are blessed with a living faith, with a good hope in God’s mercy and any discovery of the Lord Jesus Christ to their souls to make them love his dear name will live for ever and ever; yea, live when time itself shall be no more. As our Lord said, “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43); or, as it is so beautifully expressed by the prophet Daniel: “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” (Dan. 12:3.) What riches, I may well ask, are to be compared with this? If the gold of all California and all Australia with all the bullion in the Bank cellars could be made yours, what would they be in comparison with shining as a star for ever and ever in the kingdom of glory?

VI.—But now we come to our last double link of these spiritual paradoxes: “as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

i. This is true sometimes in a literal sense, but as I have before sufficiently dwelt upon this point I shall not again call your attention to it, but direct your thoughts to its spiritual meaning. How true then it is, in a spiritual sense, both of ministers and people, both of the servants and the saints of God, that they have nothing. Have you not looked at your heart again and again, pondered over your past words and works, examined the whole course of your life, viewed and reviewed it both before and after you made a profession of religion? Now when you have taken a solemn view of yourself, probing and examining heart and life by the light of God’s word, have you not come to the conclusion that you have been and are exceedingly vile; and that as regards your best attainments you are nothing and less than nothing; for whatever you have done, even with the best motives and to the highest ends, has been effectually marred, as stained and polluted by sin? Suppose a manufacturer gave to a weaver a quantity of beautiful silk for him to weave out of it a costly robe for the Queen, and suppose that when he had executed his task with great labour and skill, he purposely or

accidentally spilt a bottle of ink over it. Would his employer take it? Could it be made up into a royal robe? He would say, "You have spent a vast deal of labour upon this piece of silk, but look at it. It is covered with ink; I cannot take it. It is worthless and valueless by your folly or mismanagement." So man may work and work and work again to weave for himself a robe of righteousness, but if sin is spilt all over his work, how can God accept it at his hands? The manufacturer will not accept spoiled work; and can we therefore expect that God will take work which sin has polluted? That holy Being, before whose eyes the heavens themselves are not clean, will he take the polluted work of a polluted soul, and crown it with eternal glory? Thus when you view and review the works of your hands, and the words of your lips, what claim have you upon God? Within the last thirty years I must have preached thousands of sermons and travelled thousands of miles in the service of the sanctuary. But can I bring any of these words and works before God's heart searching eye, as possessing any merit, when the sin of my heart, poured all over them like the bottle of ink, has spoiled them all? And what is all my knowledge and learning, if I have any; all my natural and acquired abilities, if I possess them; and all my gifts, if endowed with them; what is all I have done in these thirty years for the Lord and his people, if the inward sin of my heart has run over, stained, and defiled it all? So in taking a solemn review of all I have and am as a Christian man or minister, and all I have said, thought, and done, I feel that sin has defiled the whole. Then I have nothing. I cannot boast of my gifts, my abilities, my knowledge, my learning, or labours, because the inward sin of my heart has polluted and defiled all my words, works, and ways. Then I have nothing; I am a beggar, living upon alms; and are not you the same, if the Lord has stripped you of all your strength, wisdom, and goodness?

ii. Yet, mystery of mysteries, paradox of paradoxes, though we have nothing, yet we possess all things. But how do we possess all things? In possessing Christ who is heir of all things. If we possess

Christ, what have we not in him? We have wisdom to teach us, righteousness to justify us, sanctification to make us holy, and redemption to deliver us from sin, death, and hell. If we have him, we have the favour and love of God; we have the pardon of our sins, the reconciliation of our persons, the casting behind God's back of all our backslidings, and a title to a heavenly crown. If we have him, we have everything in him, for Christ is ours, and Christ is God's. Therefore in him we possess all things. We shall have in providence things sufficient to carry us to the grave. He will give us everything that is for our good, and keep back nothing that is for our benefit. If we possess him, what have we not in him? Now the world, when death comes, what has it? Nothing to look to but the anger of God and a fearful judgment. But the saint of God, when death comes to him, what has he to look to? A crown of life, a mansion in the skies, a smiling God, and a blessed assurance that he shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Thus though the saints of God have nothing, yet they possess all things; and possessing a heavenly crown, what can God give them more? He has given his dear Son that he might shed his atoning blood to wash away their sins, and work out a perfect righteousness to justify their persons. He has now given them a complete salvation, and in giving them that he has withheld nothing; for in not keeping back his Son, he has kept nothing back that his loving heart could bestow. This made Paul say, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32.)

Now see how far you can lay your experience side by side with these heavenly paradoxes; and you must take them together. You must not take the bright side and leave out the dark; take the riches and trample upon the poverty; take "possessing all things," and not take "having nothing." You must take them as God has put them, for they are linked together, and what God hath joined together let no man put asunder. If you can find these heavenly paradoxes, these divine mysteries wrought by a divine power in your soul, you

are sure of heaven. God is as much your God, as he was Paul's; Christ as much your Christ, and heaven as much your own. But if you know nothing of these paradoxes in your own experience, I would plainly ask you how you expect to meet him who is a consuming fire? The Lord enable you to lay these things to heart.

177 Pleasant Plants And Desperate Sorrow

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning,
23rd December, 1860.

“Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength: therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips:” “In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish; but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.”

Isaiah 7:10, 11

Ever since the fall, sorrow and disappointment have been the decreed lot of man; for on that sad and evil day when Adam sinned and fell, God cursed the ground for his sake, and declared that in sorrow he should eat of it all the days of his life. Thorns also and thistles—emblems of vexation and disappointment—was it to bring forth to him, and in the sweat of his face he was to eat bread until he returned unto the ground from whence he was taken. “Dust,” said God to him, “thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” (Gen. 3:17-10.)

Sorrow, therefore, and disappointment being, by God's decree, the determined lot of man, no exertion of human skill or subtle contrivance of earthly wisdom can possibly avert them. As, then, a sailor putting out to sea, however softly the wind may blow, feels sure of encountering storms before the end of his voyage, and makes provision accordingly, so it will be our wisdom, however

fair may be our present sky, to anticipate stormy winds and rough seas before we reach our destined harbour. But of all sorrows, the most cutting is that which we bring upon ourselves; and of all disappointments, the most keen is that of which we feel ourselves to be the main and miserable authors. There is not a more true nor a more stinging reproof from the mouth of God to one under his chastening hand than this, “Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God?” nor a severer sentence against a disobedient child than, “Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know, therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts.” (Jer. 2:19.)

Let me illustrate this point, for it is one of much importance, by one or two figures. When a ship leaves the harbour on a foreign voyage, it is naturally expected that she will be tossed by wind and wave; and no skill or care of the captain can always preserve her from being cast upon the rocks. But if the captain of a ship, from sheer wilfulness or drunkenness, when he hears the cry “Breakers ahead!” still holds on his course without slackening his sail or shifting his helm, and thus rushes on to destruction, although the eye of pity may drop a tear over the loss of vessel and crew, yet it can scarcely compassionate the case of the author of the calamity as perishing by his own madness and folly. But you will perhaps say, “We do not dispute your figure, but we think that such a fact must be most improbable, if not utterly impossible.” I will not admit its improbability, still less its impossibility, for it is what many a drunken captain has done. But were it even so, literally and naturally, it is too possible, may I not say too frequent in grace. Hart, with all his deep experience, never wrote a truer verse than this, in which he expresses, with contrition of heart, his own mad folly in having so acted:

O what a fool have I been made,
Or rather made myself!

That mariner's mad part I played
Who sees yet strikes the shelf.

But take another figure to illustrate the same point, which shall also be borrowed from melancholy facts. Among those who have been condemned in these last few years to penal servitude for life, have been some who occupied at one time respectable if not high positions in society, and as such were intrusted with sums of money to a large amount. Seduced by the love of gain or a passion for pleasure, they were tempted to commit the crime of forgery, or in some way embezzle money entrusted to their charge. Detection, the almost invariable consequence of crime, followed. They were arrested, tried, and condemned, and are now in penal servitude. Now when clothed in the prison dress, he has none other for his daily and hourly companions but the vilest felons that by their conduct or conversation can disgrace human nature—would not such a man feel this to be the deepest aggravation of his miserable case, that he had brought upon himself that intolerable weight of woe, and that none but himself had been the guilty cause of all his ruin? So in grace: there is no sorrow so keen, no disappointment so cutting, as to reflect that whatever we may suffer under God's chastening strokes, even were he to visit us with his eternal displeasure, we ourselves have been the authors of our own misery.

But you may say, "What has all this to do with the text? I do not see any connection between it and the truth which you have been seeking by your figures to impress upon our minds." Allow me to say that I do. I see a connection between the text and the rueful consequences of our own madness and folly, and that is the reason why I have given you this introduction; for I see in the words before us that in them the Lord sharply reproves his people for "forgetting the God of their salvation and not being mindful of the Rock of their strength." I see also that He tells them the consequences of their forgetfulness, that though they had planted pleasant plants and had set strange slips; that though in the day they had made their plant to grow, and in the morning had made their seed to

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flourish; yet, instead of reaping as they expected a bountiful crop, they should find the harvest to be "a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow."

I have thus given you a plain sketch, a simple outline, of the meaning of the text, which I shall, with God's help and blessing, now proceed more largely to fill up; and in endeavouring to do so, I shall bring before your notice these four leading features:

I.—First, our sin in forgetting the God of our salvation, and being unmindful of the Rock of our strength.

II.—Secondly, the consequence of this forgetfulness and of this unmindfulness; that in our folly and madness, we plant pleasant plants and set our garden with strange slips.

III.—Thirdly, that a temporary success often attends this planting and setting, "In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish."

IV.—But fourthly, what is the harvest? A crop or a failure? Alas! Miserably, most miserably of the latter. For it is but "a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow."

I.—The Lord in our text speaks to his people: it is to them in fact and for them, speaking generally, that the whole Bible is written. Not but what God does speak in his holy word in many passages to men generally, that he may, clear himself of all injustice, and leave without excuse those who neglect so great a salvation as he has there brought to light. (Heb. 2:3). But viewed as a divine revelation, the Bible is written, for the most part, for the saints of God, for they really are the only persons who can read it with enlightened eyes, believe its promises, obey its precepts, and live under its sanctifying power and influence. Here certainly, whatever other parts he may address generally to the sons of men, he speaks to his people, and this not in love but in displeasure; for he brings against them a heavy charge, of which the import is, that they have "forgotten the God of their salvation, and not been mindful of the Rock of their strength." Let us examine this charge, and weigh well the words of this indictment, for they are addressed to us as much as to Israel of

old, and in them, if we have but ears to hear, we may find the Lord speaking to our consciences.

But before I draw the bill of indictment and bring the contents to bear upon your consciences, I must shew you how it is aggravated by the character of Him from whom it comes. Were He only great we might tremble at his authority without being smitten into contrition at his mercy; but he is good as well as great; and as this aggravates our offence, so it magnifies his grace. The title which he gives himself, is “the God of our salvation.” This part then of God’s character I have to unfold; and as he gives a prospective glance to the Son of his love, the Lord Jesus Christ, for he is spoken of here as the “Rock of our strength,” I must also direct your thoughts to the Lord of life and glory as that Rock on which the church is built. In speaking thus, I speak in the fullest harmony with the oracles of God, for the Bible, first and last, ascribes all salvation to Him, not only in its manifestation in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in its eternal issue in deliverance of all that fear his name from everlasting destruction, but in that original contrivance in which infinite wisdom combined with infinite grace to save millions of sinners through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Thus, because all salvation is in, and from, and of him, he is called here and elsewhere “the God of our salvation;” for He so took the whole of salvation into his own hands that he is the very God of it, as calling it all his own and appropriating to himself its beginning and end, its design and execution, all its grace on earth and all its glory in heaven.

But to establish this more plainly and clearly, I shall endeavour to show that he is “the God of our salvation” in four distinct particulars:

i First, he is so as the eternal designer and planner of it. Thoughts how the church should be saved, occupied the divine mind from all eternity. Not that God knew not what to do; not that he had to take long and laborious counsel with himself before

he could originate or fix the plan. I mean not that; but I see that in the Scripture the way of salvation, as originated in the mind of God, is ever spoken of as the highest display of God’s wisdom. Thus the Apostle speaks: “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Eph. 3:10, 11.) So again, “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory.” (1 Cor. 2:7.) And filled, as if fired with a gracious admiration of this infinite wisdom, the same blessed man of God cried out, as in an ecstasy of holy wonder, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God.” (Rom. 11:33.) The difficulty, so to speak, was to harmonise the jarring claims of justice and mercy. If mercy triumphed, justice must be violated. If sin be not punished, every perfection of God might be violated with impunity. If justice be avenged, what escape is there for the criminal? To harmonise then these jarring claims, that mercy and justice might meet together, and righteousness and peace might kiss each other, was indeed a task beyond the united wisdom of men and angels. But God contrived a way, and in the gift of his dear Son as a sacrifice for sin designed a plan for the salvation of sinners, by which they might be everlastingly saved, and he himself eternally glorified.

ii But secondly, not only was this salvation to be devised and its foundations laid deep in the eternal counsels, but it had to be executed. An architect may have in his mind a beautiful plan, and with much thought and care may have designed a noble structure: but whilst it is yet in his mind or only on paper, it is a shadow without a substance. It must be executed that it may be seen, erected that it may be admired, constructed that it may be a monument of his ability, as well as a permanent object of beauty and use. So the plan of salvation which had been contrived in the mind of God, had to be executed by the hand of him from whom it originated. Its execution commenced on the day that the Son of his love came

into this world and took our nature into union with his own divine Person. And as its execution then commenced, so it was gradually carried on during the time that our blessed Lord sojourned here below, for during that time he was ever doing the will of God. Thus he said "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day" (John 8:4); and again, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." (John 4:34.) When, then, that blessed God-man went about doing good; when that man of sorrows and acquainted with grief sweat great drops of blood in Gethsemane's gloomy garden; when he bare our sins in his own body on the tree; when by his active and passive obedience he wrought out and brought in a glorious righteousness, then God's eternal plan of salvation was fully executed. Did not the blessed Lord himself attest this with his dying lips, when he cried in a loud voice, that heaven and earth might hear, "It is finished!" As though he should say "The work is done; salvation is accomplished; my people are ransomed; justice is satisfied; every perfection of God glorified, and all his attributes harmonised. It is enough. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Then he bowed his dying head and gave up the ghost, committing his departing spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father.

iii But there is, thirdly, the application of this great salvation to the heart; for though we may hear of this salvation as being planned in the mind of God, or read in the scriptures what Jesus did and suffered in its execution; yet until that salvation is brought near to our heart, revealed and applied to our conscience, what do we really know of it as designed or executed for us? Are there not thousands who live and die without any personal knowledge of, or saving interest in this great salvation? And will not this be our case also, unless it be brought with a divine power into our soul? As, then, he is the "God of our salvation," the same God who designed it in his own eternal mind, and executed it in the Person and work of his dear Son, reveals it, manifests it, and brings it near to believing hearts, according to his own words, "I bring near

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my righteousness." And it is the personal experience of this which alone can assure us that we are saved in the Lord Jesus Christ with an everlasting salvation.

iv But fourthly, as being the God of our salvation, he has to maintain this salvation, as well as to apply it; because we are ever backsliding from it, forgetting it, and becoming unmindful of it. Is not this the very charge that he brings against his people in the words of our text, "Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation?" But because we forget him does he forget us? Does he not rather say, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Isa. 49:15); and do we not also read, "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him?" (Hos. 14:4.) Where would be the temple of mercy if the same hands of the spiritual Zerubbabel which laid the foundation should not finish it? And where would be the shoutings of eternal joy if he did not bring forth the head stone amidst the universal cry, "Grace, grace unto it?" (Zec. 4:7.)

But before I proceed to the main object of my discourse, I must drop a word upon the title given in our text to the Lord Jesus Christ, for he is here spoken of under the name of "the Rock of our strength." He is often called a "Rock" in Scripture, and we may therefore well ask what ideas does the name thus given to him convey? It conveys several. The leading idea is that of a fortified place, for as in Palestine they were much exposed to hostile incursions from the border nations, rocky hills were strongly fortified, and were thus made great use of as places of defence against the enemy. We thus read of the "munitions of rocks?" that is places not merely steep and mountainous, but so artificially fortified and strengthened by walls and bulwarks, that the enemy was not able to carry them, except by siege, which in those days, at least by the border tribes, was but rarely employed. Thus David says, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress." In this sense, then, Christ is "the Rock of our strength," as

being the refuge of our soul, in whom we may take shelter from every foe, as the Benjamites in the rock Rimmon (Jud. 20:47): as Samson in the top of the rock Etam Jud 15:8: and David in the rock cave of Adullam. But another idea conveyed by the term rock, is that of a solid foundation. Thus, as being the foundation on which God has built his Church, Jesus is indeed “the Rock of ages” that God has laid in Zion, for he is “a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation.” (Isa. 28:16.) Did not he himself say to Peter “On this rock I will build my Church?” (Matt. 16:18.) And what is this rock but he himself in his glorious Deity, eternal Sonship and suffering humanity?

But it is not my present object so much to dwell upon the points I have just brought before you, as to show you the miserable consequences of forgetting “the God of our salvation,” and becoming unmindful of “the Rock of our strength.” This is indeed a heavy charge, but there are few of the family of God to whom it is not, in greater or less measure, applicable.

When the Lord is first graciously pleased to bless the soul with some manifestation of his great salvation, and to reveal, by the unction of his grace and the teaching of his Spirit, the Rock of our strength, then we cleave to him with purpose of heart; we worship him in spirit and in truth. His yoke is then easy and his burden light; and we run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith. But after a time, when the Lord begins to withdraw his presence, deadness, coldness, darkness, and a general stupidity and lethargy gradually come over the mind. And if we give way to this spirit of slumber, and we often do give way—for even the wise virgins as well as the foolish slumbered and slept in the absence of the bridegroom—what is the consequence? We forget the God of our salvation, and become unmindful of the Rock of our strength.

II.—But as one sin is almost sure to draw on another, the blessed Spirit in our text has pointed out the consequence, the miserable consequence, of this backsliding from the Lord; which I

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proposed to unfold as the second point of my bill of indictment this morning, and which springs out of the Lord’s judicial displeasure for our sad forgetfulness of the God of our salvation. “Therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shall set it with strange slips.”

The Church is compared in the song of Solomon to a garden: “A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse.” (Song 4:12.) And this garden the Holy Ghost represents in that sacred Book, as planted with trees of the greatest fragrance and beauty, such as “Pomegranates, camphire, spikenard, and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.” The climate of the east is for the most part too dry and scorching for flowers such as deck our English gardens. Trees therefore, such as the vine, the pomegranate, and the citron, and fragrant shrubs, of which we here know little but the names, occupy their place. Spiritually viewed, these are the graces of the Spirit, which not only give forth a fragrant odour to gladden, but food also to feast the heavenly Bridegroom; for he delights in the fruits and graces of his own Spirit. This made the Bride say, “Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits;” to which he answers, “I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice.” (Song 4:16; 5:1.)

But not only is the Church, viewed generally, a garden in which the Lord takes supreme delight, but each individual soul in which he works by his Holy Spirit may be represented by the same figure; for it is thus that general truths are brought home to particular cases, and what is true of the Church as a whole is true of each member of it as an individual. This seems to be the garden referred to in the text, in which we unhappily too often plant our pleasant plants and set it with strange slips. Now this garden should have nothing in it, as the garden of the Lord, but the graces and fruits of the Spirit. Weeds will spring up; scarce any amount of careful culture can keep them down; for as charlock and thistles will grow in the field, so chick-weed and groundsel will start up in the most carefully cultivated garden. But this is not the charge brought against the

Church here. The Lord does not reprove her for neglect of her garden, nor for the weeds that spring up in the borders. This were fault enough, but there is a much greater; that with her own hand she plants pleasant plants in the Lord's borders, and sets strange slips in those beds in which he himself had planted myrrh, and aloes, and all the chief spices. This, of course, has a mystical and spiritual meaning, and what this is I have now, with God's help and blessing, to open; and first I have to consider what are these pleasant plants.

Every man has his peculiar propensity, which, even after he is called by the grace of God, still clings closely to him, and as being that in which he naturally takes delight it is to him "a pleasant plant." This delight in what is not of God, this seeking of pleasure and happiness out of him, first broke forth in our nature in Paradise. Tempted by Satan, Eve, our first parent, was taken with the appearance of that tree of good and evil which she was forbidden to touch or taste. For we read that "when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat." The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye combined to seduce her from the path of innocency, and not only did she eat herself, but gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat (Gen. 3:6); and thus they plunged themselves and all their future race into sin and woe. Now we have all this propensity. Eve's blood runs in our veins. Our fingers itch to touch what Eve took; and as no tree of good and evil grows up before our eyes, we plant instead thereof our pleasant plants, and by them bring ourselves into misery and trouble. But look at this in a variety of instances.

i A person may be called by the grace of God early in life, before the cares and anxieties of this present evil world may have come upon him; and being blessed and favoured with spirituality of mind, his affections may be strongly fixed upon the Lord, and be much set upon things above. He has then no pleasant plants to

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draw away his heart from heavenly things, and can thus serve the Lord without distraction. But after a time he sees good to change his situation in life, and to take to himself a partner of his sorrows and joys. None can object to this, for marriage is honourable in all. But what is often the result? That the wife or husband becomes the pleasant plant; the affections which were once fixed upon the Lord are in a measure withdrawn from him, and rest too much upon the partner of the bosom; and this becomes a snare which entangles the feet and often casts the believer down into carnality and death. But it may please the Lord, after a time, to crown the union with children as a heritage of the Lord, and then there may arise a succession of pleasant plants.

Now there is no objection to our loving our wives and children, for the Scripture bids husbands love their wives, and wives love their husbands. This is Scriptural precept and Gospel practice; but the Scripture has not bidden us set them as idols in the very bosom where God has erected his throne. If then, these pleasant plants draw away the affections from God, are they not snares and traps? Is it not full of danger to idolise wife and children? How the wives of Solomon drew him into idolatry and befooled the wisest of men! What a snare was Hagar even to Abraham, and Michal all but proved the ruin of David! What a snare too were the sons of Eli to their indulgent Father! And when Jacob set his Joseph, and David his Absalom as pleasant plants in their garden, what trouble and sorrow did they bring upon their heads! It would argue want of common affection if children were not pleasant plants to their parents. At this time of the year especially, do not parents love to see the olive branches round the Christmas table! But though the branches may hang round the table, the roots must not twine round the heart where Jesus should be supreme, lest they hide the beams of the Son of Righteousness, by surrounding his altar with their rank stem and overshadowing leaves.

ii But all who fear God have not wives or children, or may love them without idolatry, yet may they have pleasant plants no less

dangerous to their soul's profit and peace. There is, for instance, your business, your farm, your profession, your daily occupation, and in carrying on this you are and should be diligent. "Not slothful in business" is a Gospel precept; but you may make it a pleasant plant far beyond the requirements of diligence and industry. I well know that in these times it is almost impossible for a man to pay his way who does not throw his whole mind into his business. But the whole mind is one thing and the whole heart another. It is through the avenue of these pursuits that sin comes in, and too often like a flood. You may take so much pleasure in your business or occupation that it may steal away well nigh every thought from God, and morning, noon, and night your heart may be in it so as to engross your affections, and fill you with darkness, barrenness, and deadness to everything that is spiritual and godly. And if your business increase, if your farm be prosperous, if money come rolling in, how easily you may make of this a Christmas tree! As you hang upon its branches the gains of the year, it may be to you the pleasantest plant that your eyes ever rested upon; and yet it may not be one of God's own planting. We shall see before we have done what may become of this pleasant plant that you have taken such care to plant and water, and which under such care is every day growing in your admiring eyes more and more vigorous and beautiful.

iii But all good men are not in business, or even if they are do not make it their idol; yet each may still have his natural propensity, which may be to him his pleasant plant. Take the figure naturally, how widely tastes differ even in such a matter as flowers in a garden! To some there is no flower like the rose; others see no beauty but in a geranium, and others say, "Give me the fuchsia." So each may have his pleasant plant to which he gives his chief thoughts and attention. I have my pleasant plant, and perhaps more than one, and you have yours. I believe if God had not called me by his grace, I should have spent my life in study, in reading books, acquiring languages, and devoting my

whole mind to various branches of human knowledge, for there is scarcely one to which I have not a strong natural inclination. This was my pleasant plant which I cultivated up to the very time when eternal realities, impressed upon my mind by divine power, turned me from it to fall in love with the Rose of Sharon. But I still find that the pleasant plant, from long cultivation, has struck a deep root into my natural being, and I have carefully to guard against it to this day, or it would soon spread into the borders of my spiritual garden, and fill up those beds which should alone be occupied by the trees of frankincense planted in them by the blessed Spirit. Your pleasant plant may not be my pleasant plant, nor my pleasant plant your pleasant plant. My pleasant plant may look very ill in your eyes, and be considered rather a noxious weed than a blooming flower: and so your pleasant plant may in my eyes be but a thorn or a thistle, and better rooted up by your own hand than allowed to grow.

But time will not suffice to point out the various pleasant plants, which, when we forget the God of our salvation and become unmindful of the Rock of our strength, we set in our border. They may be innocent in themselves: they might be planted and cultivated in some back border where the sun might never shine upon them, and where we should rarely walk except by constraint. The sin is planting them in the Lord's borders placing them in the beds appropriated to the Owner of the garden. It is the forgetting the God of our salvation, who has done so great things for our souls, and setting up an idol in his place, that makes the sin so grievous. Thus the Lord remonstrates with his people by the prophet Jeremiah, and calls upon the very heavens to be astonished at their sin in this matter. "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." There was no sin in having cisterns, but the sin was in forsaking for them the fountain of living waters. Thus, then,

whatever we love more than God; whatever be our besetment or propensity, if indulged and delighted in; whatever occupies our mind as an object of eager pursuit; whatever we give our late and early thoughts to; whatever through the day steals in, catches our affections, and draws away our heart from the Lord, so as to love it more than Him who is the altogether lovely—this is a pleasant plant that we have planted in God's border, and by doing so have in heart departed from the Lord our God.

But there is worse behind than this, a still more grievous, a still further departure from the Lord; for one sin is almost sure to draw on another, and the farther we go from the Lord, the worse we become. There is "a setting of strange slips." You know that in a garden there are beds open to view, and there are back places out of sight. In the beds and borders open to view, we have our geraniums, our roses, and our verbenas, with other many-hued flowers to please the eye. But then there are back borders in what we call the kitchen garden, where the cabbages and potatoes grow, besides out-of-the-way places under the hedge, or in the dark shrubbery, where henbane and hemlock, and poisonous weeds may thrive out of sight. So in the garden of the soul, there are the "pleasant plants" open to view, which we are not ashamed that our friends should see, and there are "the strange slips" set in the back borders, which we are glad enough to put out of sight.

But why are these out of sight productions, called "strange?" The word "strange" in Scripture often means what is ungodly, and carries with it the idea of wickedness. The reason why it bears this signification arose from the peculiar position of the children of Israel. They were a nation separated unto the Lord from every other. They were God's peculiar people, consecrated by external covenant, and therefore God said to them, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine, and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." (Ex. 19:5, 6.) Therefore, all foreign customs, foreign

dresses, and foreign ways were ungodly, as breaking down that peculiar relationship in which they stood as a separate people to God. For this reason, the word "strange" came to signify anything unholy or ungodly. Thus, Nadab and Abihu "offered strange fire before the Lord" (Lev. 10:1); that is, fire which had not been kindled by God himself upon the altar. So we read of "strange incense" (Ex. 30:9); of "a strange vine" (Jer. 2:21); of "strange wives" Ezra 10:2; and of "strange women, whose mouth is a deep pit." (Prov. 22:14.) In this sense, therefore, "strange slips" mean any thing set in the Lord's garden of an ungodly nature—what, in one word, we may term poisonous plants.

But the question arises at once in your mind, "Can any one who really and truly fears God ever set strange slips in his garden?" Let me answer this question by another. Are there no back borders? Are there no hedge-banks or ditches, no secret corners and low shrubberies out of sight, and yet still a part of the garden? Are there no dark corners, no hidden spots in your heart, in which you have at various times set strange slips; and have set them perhaps by night, as being ashamed of doing so in open day? If you say, "No; my garden may have a few weeds in it; but I have never been so base as to set poisonous plants in the back borders;" either your case is singular, or what is more probable, you have never taken a thorough and complete view of the garden; you have overlooked those hidden spots of your heart that the eye of God scans, or may be so ignorant as not to know a weed from a flower. Does not our text address itself to the people of God? For to whom else is he "the God of their salvation," and to whom else is Jesus "the Rock of their strength?" How, too, can they "forget" him, or be "unmindful" of him who never was in their hearts? Thus we have God's own testimony that even those who fear his great and glorious name, do, when they forget him, plant their pleasant plants and set their strange slips.

And has conscience no voice in your bosom here? Is there no secret sin that you want to indulge—no base lust: no filthy desire;

no vile passion; no craving after iniquity? Are these vile weeds always torn up the moment that they peep out of the soil? To let them grow is the same thing as to set them; for where is the difference between letting a noxious weed grow when it might be pulled up and planting another by its side? Every time, then, that you secretly indulge the movement of any sin, you are setting a strange slip, fostering a poisonous plant in the garden of God.

But again, if free from such sins as these, have you no self-righteousness shooting and growing up in your heart: Are there no liftings up of Pharisaic pride? Do you never think, if not say, "Stand by thyself; I am holier than thou?" Are you never pleased with your prayers and performances; with your good feelings and intentions? Do you never look with complacency upon a consistent life, and not having been entangled like so many others in slips and falls? What is this but a strange slip, for I am sure that the blessed Spirit never planted it in your heart?

Have you never feelings of enmity against the saints of God? Have you no malice, no suspicion, no jealousy, no envy, no unkind thoughts, no vile workings against those whom you can hardly deny to be the children of God, if any strife or division has broken out between you and them; or if they have given you real or supposed cause of offence? Are not these strange slips? And where have you set them? Out of sight; under the hedge behind the shrubbery. You can show your roses, geraniums, and verbenas, and even be pleased that they should be admired; but you won't show the dark hemlock, the stinking henbane, the pricking brier, the stinging nettle, all of which are growing so strongly, and tendered and nurtured so secretly, yet so carefully, in this back-border of yours. But you will say, "I do not cultivate them. I know they are there; but I do not foster them." Why then do you not pull them up; why do you suffer them to grow unchecked? But you must be conscious that often you even do cultivate them by indulging them as much as you dare.

But these strange slips are so many that I cannot enumerate

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 them. I must, therefore, take them as they grow, thick and rank in the border. Have you, then, no pride, no self-exaltation, no presumption, no vain confidence, no unbelief and infidelity, no hardness, carelessness, recklessness, darkness, and deadness of spirit? Have you made your heart wholly clean? Can you stand before God, the holy, heart-searching Jehovah, and say that your hands, eyes, ears, lips, and every member of your body are free from iniquity? These, then, are the strange slips that you have been planting in the back borders. We are all guilty here. I do not stand before you as if I were free from iniquity and sin. I know what my heart is, and I know that I have, when left to myself, been verily guilty in this matter; for I have again and again planted pleasant plants and set strange slips. Such, too, should I plant and set every day of my life, except as kept back and held up by the mighty power of God. Nay, I believe that every man that knows his own heart must with me plead guilty here, for none are altogether free from these charges: and he that knows most of himself will acknowledge that he thus sins, and that just in proportion as he forgets the God of his salvation and is unmindful of the Rock of his strength.

III.—But it is time to pass on to our next point, which is the temporary success which seems to crown this planting and setting. "In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish."

I wish to observe that all the way through the Lord is speaking as if judicially. When, then, he says, "Therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shall set it with strange slips," it is not that he either compels his people to plant or approves of their setting, but denounces against them this as the threatened consequence and punishment of their departing from him. In a similar way, when he says "In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow," he neither compels nor commends such a course, but predicts it as the judicial result. Thus for a time the Lord seemingly winks at all these evils; nay more, he allows them a season of passing prosperity; for having lost the light of his countenance, the planters and setters do

not seem to be conscious of the evil of which they are guilty. Their eyes have become so blinded, their hearts so hardened, and their judgment so obscured by forgetting the God of their salvation and being unmindful of the Rock of their strength, that they have lost in good measure that tenderness of conscience which would have shown them the snares in which they were being entangled and the temptations by which they were being overcome.

But such, unhappily, is the power of sin, the strength of temptation, and the subtlety of Satan, that a man may be grievously entangled in many evil courses, or be much given up to carelessness and carnality, and yet scarcely see or feel, from sheer stupor of mind and callousness of conscience, into what a state of backsliding and alienation of heart from God he has fallen. Thus Ephraim is said to have been “broken in judgment”; and “strangers” are declared to “have devoured his strength and he knew it not; yea, grey hairs were here and there upon him and he knew not.” (Hos. 7:9.) This was the reward and the consequence of his backsliding. He had left God, and therefore for a time God left him. When a man falls into this sad state of soul, “in the day he makes his plant to grow, and in the morning he makes his seed to flourish.”

Have you not done this? and have you not been very much pleased when you have got your plant to grow? When you have a pleasant wife, or an affectionate husband, healthy and handsome children, a comfortable house, good furniture, with money coming in so as to afford you every comfort and indulgence consistent with your situation in life; when, too, you can look around you and see all these pleasant plants before your eyes, and that you have been successful not only in planting them but in making them to grow, do you not feel very comfortable, and indulge at times in no small amount of self-complacency that such a measure of success and prosperity attend you? If you are in business, are you not very pleased if a growing number of customers come to your shop: and if your business should increase, your profits be augmented, and if

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day by day you should become better off in worldly circumstances, are you not tempted to increase your establishment, and thus make your pleasant plant to grow larger and larger and look handsomer and handsomer?

As, then, you look sometimes at your prospects, are you not tempted to think and say, “How pleasant everything is around me! What a wonder-working God he is to give me all this prosperity! I wonder there is so much poverty and discontent in the world! Why are not people more industrious and happy?” Or say that you are a farmer, and that circumstances not this year, I fear, but there are times when they are so are flourishing and things looking up. Is there not such a thing as standing upon a hill and looking around with complacency, “Here I have a good farm, good land, good crops, a good landlord, and I hope to leave all this to my son by and by?” Or if not in business, you may still look round you and say, “What an excellent wife I have, or good husband, what a pleasant home, and how much I am generally respected! I have health and strength and every worldly comfort, and how happy and pleasant things seem to be just now!” Now is not this happy, easy life, this health and success, just what your carnal heart loves? Is not this prosperous and comfortable state just the very thing that suits your natural mind?

But this is the very thing upon which God puts his finger, in the text. This is the very carnal ease, to which he is giving you up, that you may one day rue its miserable consequences. This is in the day making your plant to grow; for you keep watering your plant; you want it to grow larger and larger, till it overtop all your neighbour’s trees. It is nothing to you, that the fowls of the air rest in its branches, so long as your tree bears more abundant crops of fruit. Do you want your pleasant plant cut down, or even a single branch lopped off? No. You don’t want any disappointment, any vexatious law-suit, any secret drain upon your gains, any heavy losses, any short crops, failing business, bad debts, an uncomfortable home, sickly children, an invalid wife, or a dying husband. That would

be indeed a reverse; that would be death to your pleasant plant; that would be a worm at the root of your gourd. You want no path of trial and tribulation, but to sit under your spreading fig tree. You want still to enjoy a strong, healthy body, plenty of food and raiment, money at command, everything pleasant at home, everything prosperous in business, and everything successful in life.

And so you keep watering, watering, watering your pleasant plant, and the more you can make it grow, and the more you can bring it up in the sun, and the better and healthier it looks, the more you are pleased. The stronger the root, the longer the stem, the larger the leaves, and the more abundant the fruit, the more you admire the pleasant plant which you have set in your garden. Alas! You little care what becomes of the myrrh and aloes, and all the chief spices which this pleasant plant of yours has so overgrown, so starved, so stunted, and so overshadowed, till all their scent is gone, and they themselves scarcely seen. The Lord seems to let you go on; and you may even so forget the God of your salvation, and be so unmindful of the Rock of your strength—that smitten Rock who sweat blood and agonised on the cross to save your soul—that you may take all this prosperity as a mark in your favour, and put God's providences in the place of God's graces.

But there is worse even than this, for there is making your seed to flourish; for this seed is "the strange slips" before spoken of as set by your own hand in the back borders. It is bad enough to be ever watering your pleasant plant and making it grow, but it is far worse to make the "strange slip" to flourish. But even this you do. Let me appeal to your conscience. Have you never nurtured your pride, your self-righteousness, your vain confidence? Have you never swathed and swaddled your bosom idol, as misshapen and ugly a god as ever Hindoo worshipped? Have you never fed your jealousy, your enmity, your suspicion, your revengeful thoughts, your unkind feelings, and the flame that has burnt in your bosom against an enemy, or even against a brother? Have

you not nurtured these devilish feelings, and done all that you could to make them flourish, thinking all the time, perhaps, what a wonderful Christian you were, while God looked at all this abomination, and hated what he saw going on?

Have you not built your airy castles, planted visionary paradises, and thought what you would do and how you would act, if ever they were realised? Though you may not have had money or opportunity to build a new house, or even leave your old one; yet you have built a castle every day, though it has been a castle in the air; and though you may not have an inch of ground to call your own, you have had a garden within, which you have planted with all care, and watered morning and evening. O, if a man does but take a faithful view of his own heart, of what is continually passing in his own mind, he will not think this an overdrawn picture! He will not start back with horror from the portrait, and cry out "What base wretch are you describing? Can such a man live and move, and yet have the fear of God in his heart?" If I dip my brush into God's own book and use no other colours than are spread on God's own palette, you must not say I paint man too black; and if I dip it also into my own heart, I believe that from mine I can pretty well describe yours. Instead of finding fault with my portrait, you had better view it as your own; you had better first look into your own garden and examine the pleasant plants and the strange slips, and then you will be a better judge whether it be wholly a paradise of God's planting, or whether many a rank weed does not grow there which his hand never set in its beds and borders.

IV.—But we now come to our fourth and last point, which is the harvest reaped from all this planting and setting. This of course is the grand, the expected, and long looked-for consummation of the whole. Is not the farmer ever fixing his eye upon his harvest? What else is to pay him for all his cost and trouble? This with him is the crowning of the year. So you all have your harvest. You are not, it is true, all of you farmers; but you have all a harvest in prospect or in possession; for the harvest, in our text, is the success of your

pleasant plants, and the crop which you should reap from your strange slips.

The harvest may at present be but in your own brain—merely in that busy, active, speculating imagination of yours which would fain have, not only one harvest in a year, but a harvest every month. You have not been engaged all this time in planting pleasant plants and setting strange slips, without expecting you are to get something from it. And what you are to get from it is to be your “harvest”—a harvest of pleasure, of enjoyment, of delight, of profit, or of something of which you can say, “I shall fill my barns with it; and when I have filled my barns and there bestowed all my fruits and my goods, I shall say to my soul, Take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”

But God’s thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways; he has other thoughts concerning the harvest than what you have been dreaming of, and other intentions respecting it than those which you have been speculating upon, and in prospect almost insured. “But the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.”

These words seem this year to have been literally fulfilled. I heard a cry this autumn which I hope I shall never hear again, and that some of you young people may never hear for the whole of your lives; for I heard the farming boys with the last load of corn cry “Harvest home” in the month of November, and this may not occur again for another century. And as to the harvest being “a heap,” I saw with my own eyes acres of mown barley lying in the fields in October, that seemed to my unpractised gaze more fit for the dunghill than to be gathered into the rick. So literally and naturally, through the rainy season, the harvest to many a farmer has been but “a heap;” and to those already crushed by preceding bad times and heavy losses, instead of finding in it a means of extrication, it has been but a “day of grief and of desperate sorrow.”

But view it spiritually, for I speak to spiritual people, and desire, as a servant of the Lord, to handle the subject with spiritual fingers.

Where then is the harvest which you have been expecting to reap from your pleasant plants and strange slips? Has it not been to you spiritually what the harvest has been literally to many a poor farmer this year,—ruined by incessant rains, swept away by floods, or tossed into a heap, and carried away to the dunghill?

Where are your “pleasant plants” that you planted years ago? Where the “strange slips” that you watered and cultivated and took such care of? What has been the harvest? You who married early in life, have things turned out just as you expected? You expected to go down to the grave without trouble in your families, sickness in your houses, affliction in your bodies, poverty in your circumstances, or those deep and heavy trials that have made all your harvest to be “a heap;” a heap of wet straw, instead of ripe and rich and full ears.

O, the wisdom, and may I not add, the goodness and mercy of a wonder-working God, to confound all our prospects, pull down our airy castles, root up our pleasant plants and strange slips, and with his own fingers throw them into a heap, and make them fit only for the dunghill! How many bosom idols you have indulged; how many sins you have fostered; how much pride you have nursed; how many envious suspicions, cruel jealousies, and bitter feelings have you warmed in your bosom! What care you have taken of your pleasant plants! How you have in winter put a hand-glass over them to keep the frost out, and watered them in summer lest they should die of drought! Nor have you taken less care of your strange slips! How often and how long you have harboured unkindly feelings against some offending brother, and nursed your wrath to keep it warm!

But let us see in what way the harvest is made “a heap.” The Lord works in various ways, but they all tend to the same end. Thus He may lay you upon a sick bed, bring trouble and distress into your soul, set before you your grievous backslidings, and lay the guilt of them so upon your conscience as almost to sink you into despair. The day of reckoning is now come, when the Lord brings

to light the secret thoughts of the heart, and lays His chastening hand upon the backslider, filling him with his own ways. Where, and what is now your harvest? What has become now of your pleasant plants that you took such delight in, and those strange slips that you cultivated with such care? Why, nothing but a heap.

We reap what we sow. "If we sow to the flesh, of the flesh we reap corruption." Here is the end of all idols; here is the termination of all prospects of happiness independent of God. Here is the fruit of carnal ease, worldly security, spiritual pride, towering presumption, vain confidence, thinking highly of ourselves, and despising others. Look at that poor backslider, lying upon a sick bed, with the frowns of God in his soul, Jesus absent, Satan present, faith at its lowest ebb, hope scarcely lifting up its head, and love dwindled down to the lowest spark. See how he loathes what he has loved; listen to his almost despairing language of self-condemnation, "O that I had lived more in the fear of God, had walked more circumspectly and uprightly, had watched against bosom sins, mortified my lusts, crucified the flesh with its affections, not indulged every vain thought, nor nurtured every bad passion. O that I had walked, and spoke, and lived, and acted more as becometh the Gospel, and the profession which I made, and sought more to adorn the doctrine of God in all things."

Is not this now with him "the day of grief and of desperate sorrow?" And so it will be with us, if we have been planting pleasant plants and setting strange slips, and been suffered of God to do so, so as to have walked in a path of ease and carnal security. Then, indeed, shall we see what backsliders we have been, what base wretches, when the harvest lies before our eyes "a heap," only fit for the dunghill, and we mourn before the Lord in "the day of grief and desperate sorrow."

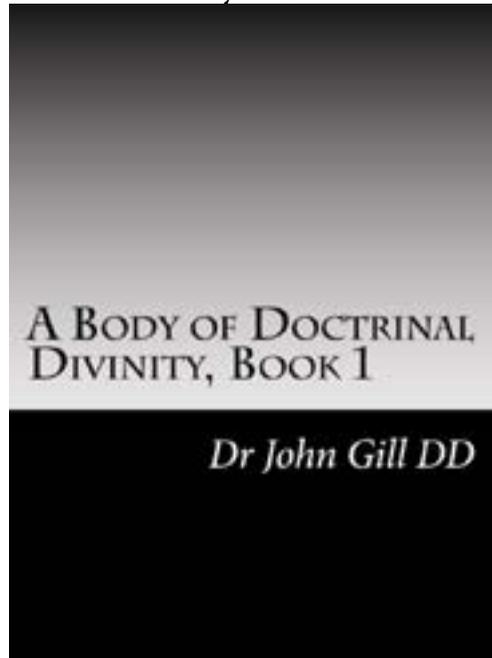
But let me not leave you mourning here. Let me show you mercy and grace mingled with, and shining through all this. Is not God rich in mercy, in bringing all this secret backsliding to light, in making the harvest to be a heap? Is it not still His gracious

hand made manifest, in bringing sickness or painful bereavements into your families, visiting you with heavy trials and painful afflictions, and by these timely chastisements, to make you feel, and that deeply, the miserable consequence of not walking more in His fear, and thus make you reap the bitter fruit of backsliding? Is not all this not in wrath, but in mercy? Is it not for the good of your soul, that you may not go on adding sin to sin and iniquity to iniquity, and die at last under the wrath of God? For by these things God brings his erring, backsliding children to their senses; and thus stops them before they have altogether given up God and godliness.

But as He afflicts for their good, and only takes away one harvest to give another, one that shall endure for ever and ever in His eternal kingdom, He will bring in due time a word of consolation to lift up their drooping spirit, and to show them that notwithstanding all their sins, he is still "the God of their salvation," and that Jesus is still "the Rock of their strength." Thus by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of their spirit. By these mingled dealings of judgment and mercy, the rod and kiss, the frown and smile, we learn to loathe ourselves, so as to remember and be confounded and never open our mouths any more because of our shame when he is pacified towards us for all that we have done, saith the Lord. (Eze. 16:63.)

Thus we learn to hate our own folly and our own sin, and to see and feel more and more the superaboundings of grace over all the aboundings of our iniquity. As, then, we are blessed with a feeling sense of the Lord's goodness and mercy in not dealing with us after our sins nor rewarding us after our iniquities, we shall learn to cleave to Him more closely with purpose of heart. Thus, though there is no excuse for us, for we must still plead guilty, all these varied dealings in the hands of God eventually work for our spiritual good: and the effect ever will be and must be to humble the sinner in the dust, and to crown Jesus Lord of all.

A Body Of Doctrinal Divinity Book 1



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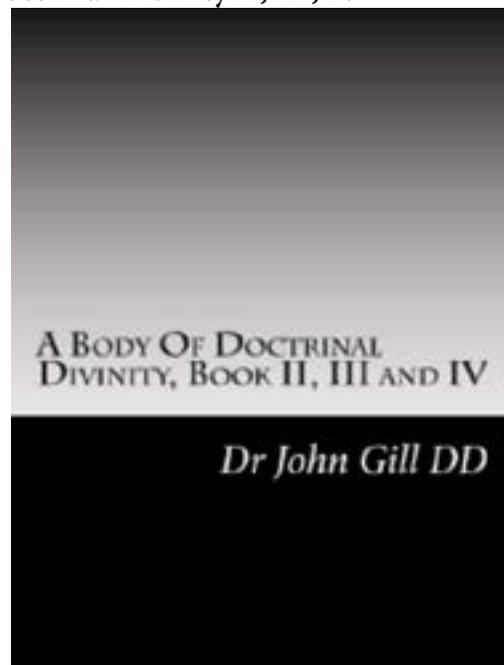
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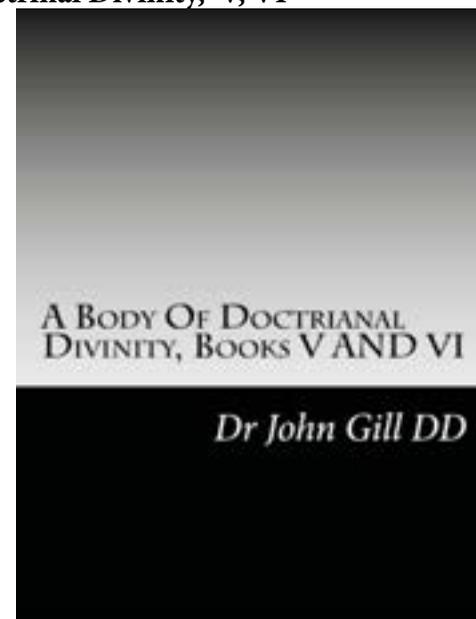
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A Body of Doctrinal Divinity, V, VI



A System OF Practical Truths

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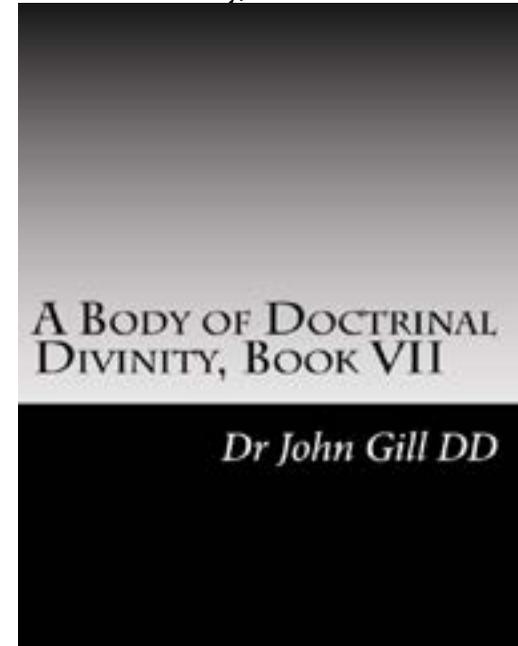
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A Body of Doctrinal Divinity, Book VII



A System Of Practical Truths

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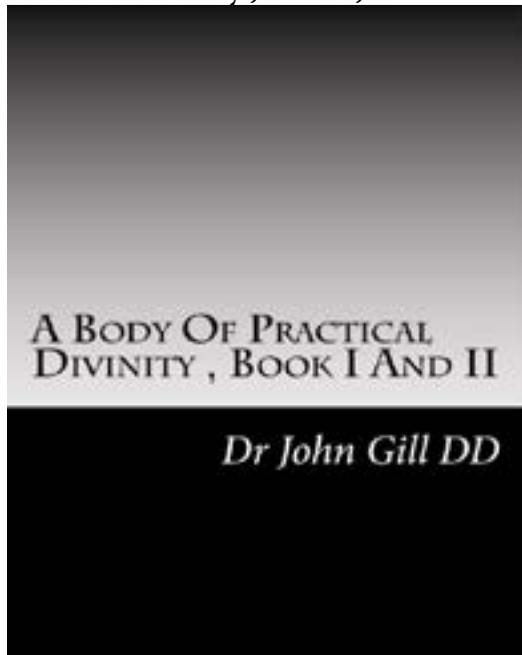
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A Body Of Practical Divinity , Book I, II



A System of Practical Truths

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This reproduction of Dr John Gill's Body of Divinity is book I and II of Practical Divinity of total of IV books.

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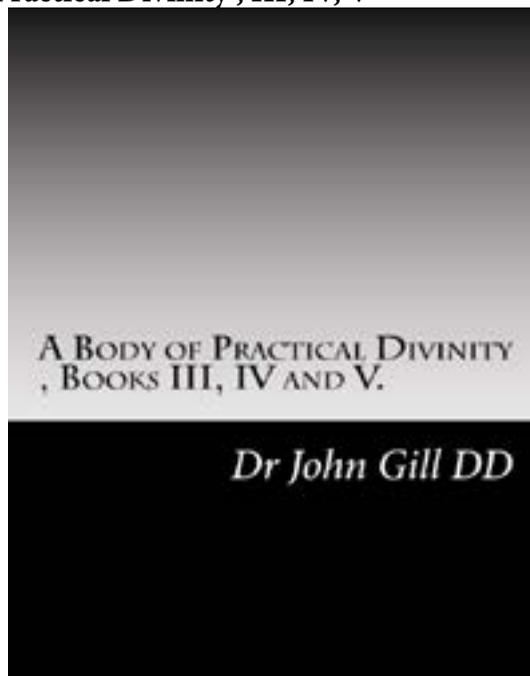
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A Body of Practical Divinity , III, IV, V**A System of Practical Truths**

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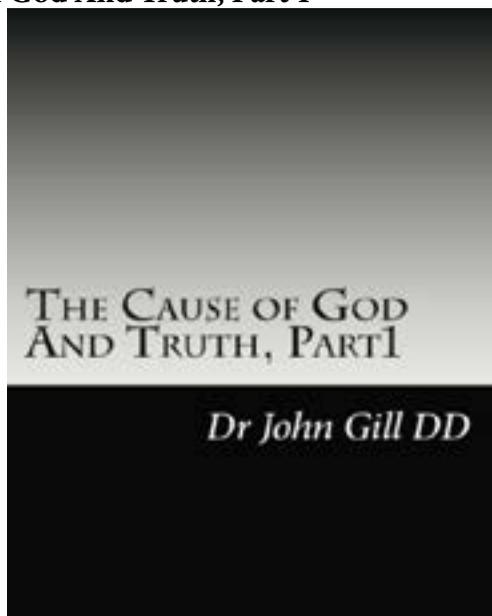
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The Cause of God And Truth, Part 1



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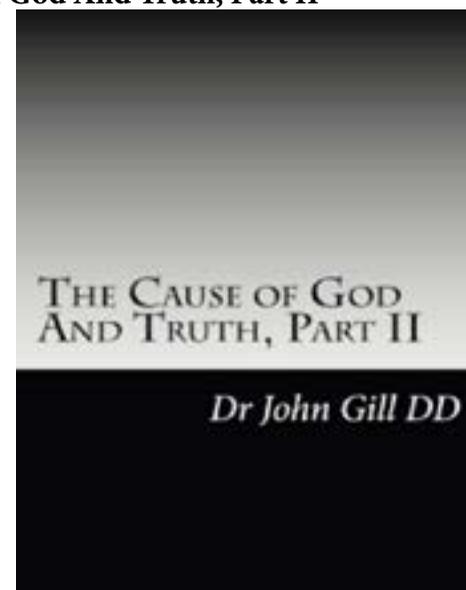
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The Cause of God And Truth, Part II



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BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic

This is volume 2 of this 4 part series and it should be known that the following work was undertaken and begun about the year 1733 or 1734, at which time Dr. Whitby's Discourse on the Five Points was reprinting, judged to be a masterpiece on the subject, in the English tongue, and accounted an unanswerable one ; and it was almost in the mouth of every one, as an objection to the Calvinists, Why do not ye answer Dr. Whitby ? Induced hereby, I determined to give it another reading, and found myself inclined to answer it, and thought this was a very proper and seasonable time to engage in such a work. In the year 1735, the First Part of this work was published, in which are considered the several passages of Scripture made use of by Dr. Whitby and others in favour of the Universal Scheme, and against the Calvinistical Scheme, in which their arguments and objections are answered, and the several passages set in a just and proper light. These, and what are contained in the following Part in favour of the Particular Scheme, are extracted from Sermons delivered in a Wednesday evening's lecture. The Second Part was published in the year 1736, in which the several passages of Scripture in favour of special and distinguishing grace, and the arguments from them, are vindicated from the exceptions of the Arminian, and particularly from Dr. Whitby, and a reply made to answers and objections to them.

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1 Peter 1:5.

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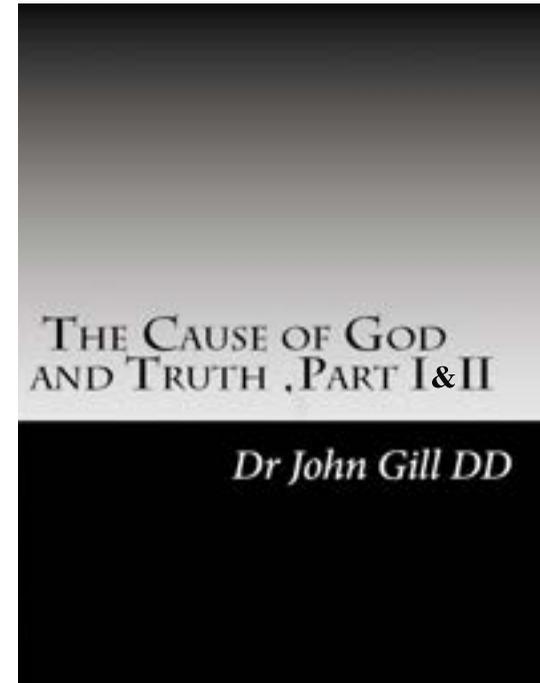
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John 14:16.

John 10:28.

1 Corinthians 1:8, 9.

The Cause of God and Truth Part III



The Doctrines of Grace

Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Authored by David Clarke
CetEd

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This book contains John Gill's answers to Dr Whitby objections
to The Doctrines of Grace under the following heads.

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 Jude 1:4. 1
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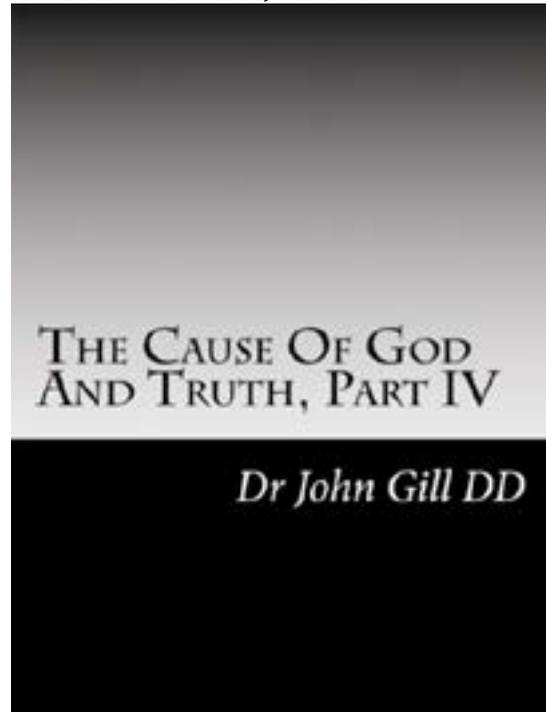
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The Second Part was published in the year 1736, in which the several passages of Scripture in favour of special and distinguishing grace, and the arguments from them, are vindicated from the exceptions of the Arminians, and particularly from Dr. Whitby, and a reply made to answers and objections to them.

The Third Part was published in 1737.

The Cause Of God And Truth, Part IV



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The Third Part was published in 1737, and is a confutation of the arguments from reason used by the Arminians, and particularly by Dr. Whitby, against the above doctrines ; and a vindication of such as proceed on rational accounts in favour of them, in which it appears that they are no more disagreeable to right reason than to divine revelation ; to the latter of which the greatest deference should be paid, though the Rationalists of our age too much neglect it, and have almost quitted it ; but to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them.

In this part of the work is considered the agreement of the sentiments of Mr. Hobbes and the Stoic philosophers with those of the Calvinists, in which the difference between them is observed, and the calumny removed ; to which is added, a Defence of the Objections to the Universal Scheme, taken from the prescience and the providence of God, and the case of the Heathens.

The Fourth Part was published in 1738, in which the sense of the ancient writers of the Christian Church, before the times

of Austin, is given ; the importance and consequence of which is shown, and that the Arminians have very little reason to triumph on that account.

This work was published at a time when the nation was greatly alarmed with the growth of Popery, and several learned gentlemen were employed in preaching against some particular points of it ; but the author of this work was of opinion, that the increase of Popery was greatly owing to the Pelagianism, Arminianism, and other supposed rational schemes men run into, contrary to divine revelation, This was the sense of our fathers in the last century, and therefore joined these and Popery together in their religious grievances they were desirous of having redressed ; and indeed, instead of lopping off the branches of Popery, the axe should be laid to the root of the tree, Arminianism and Pelagianism, the very life and soul of Popery.

This is Part 4 of 4 parts, and a new edition, with some alterations and improvements, is now published by request.

This work contains:

Chapter 1 Of Predestination

Chapter 2 Of Redemption

Chapter 3 Or Original Sin

Chapter 4 Of Efficacious Grace

Chapter 5 Of Perseverance

Chapter 6 Of The Heathens

A Vindication of The Cause of God and Truth

This work contains:

Chapter 1 Of Predestination

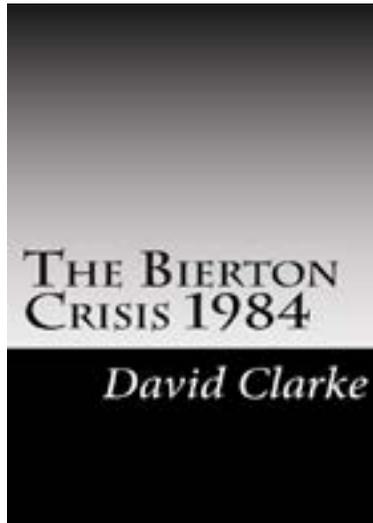
Chapter 2 Of Redemption

Chapter 3 Or Original Sin

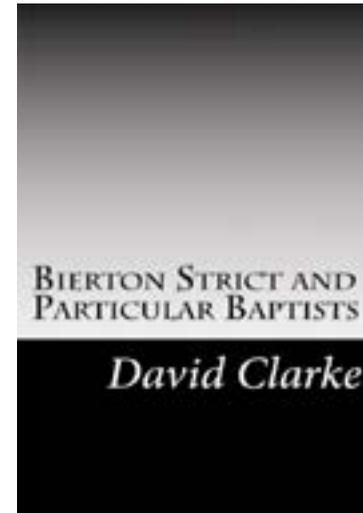
Chapter 4 Of Efficacious Grace

Chapter 5 Of Perseverance

Chapter 6 Of The Heathens

The Bierton Crisis 1984

The following pages contain a collection of recorded events, which seek to explain the reason for my secession from the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church. Bierton is a village near Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire. The Bierton Church was a society, in law, called Strict and Particular Baptists, formed in 1831 and was presided by the son of John Warburton of Trowbridge, Wiltshire. It and became a Gospel Standard listed church in 1983. My succession from this church was not a separation from any other Strict Baptist church just the Bierton Church. I was not the subject of church discipline but rather I withdrew from the communion as a matter of conscience. And according to our church rules practice I am still a member. Conscience Free My voluntary leaving of this society leaves me free in conscience to relate my experiences, being bound only by the Law of Christ and not the rules of that society. The date of my secession was the 26th of June 1984. This is written believing this may help any persons finding themselves in similar situations and to point out the ignorance of some religious people.

Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists

My Testimony Being Set for a defence and confirmation of the Gospel Kindle Edition

by David Clarke (Author)

There are three separate accounts in the New Testament of a man who had been possessed with devils. He had been living among the tombs and the people had attempted to bind him with chains and fetters but he broke them so he would not be bound. People were afraid of him and avoided him. He had no house and wore no cloths and the devil drove him often into the wilderness.

And Jesus had just demonstrated his authority over the wind and the tempest to his disciples and now had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man and gave leave for the legion of devils to go into the swine and as a result the man was found at the feet of Jesus clothed in his right mind. The man wanted to be with Jesus and go with him, but Jesus said no but rather got to his own city and tell of all that the Lord had done for him. And straight way he went and published throughout the whole city of all that Jesus had done for him.

This book is a record of the personal testimony of the author in

which he tells of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for him it was first published on 11th February 2001 under the title *Converted on LSD Trip*. It is not written to glorify his past life but written as a testimony to what the Lord has done for him, despite his past sinful and criminal life. In this he tells of his early life before his sudden conversion from crime to Christ, him learning the doctrines of the grace of God and him joining the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists church, in 1976. He tells of his succession from the church over matters of conscience, in 1984. These matters are told in detail, in his book *The Bierton Crisis 1984*

Even the apostle Paul told of his past life as a religious man in his own defense when persecuted by the jews. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, circumcised the 8th day, Of the tribe of Benjamin, as toughting the Law blameless, not in a way of boasting but to show his past life, even though he was a religious man he considered it as worthless. He had been a Pharisee and from a religious zealous point of view persecuted the church even unto strange cities. He punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blasphemy, and being exceeding mad against them.

When the Apostle Paul was arrested by the lord on the Damascus Road he fell to the ground and Jesus instructed him that he was to make him a minister and a witness both of the things he had seen and those things He would appear to him.

The author has written this book for this reason to inform the reader of all the that lord Jesus has done for him and to point out those important truths of the gospel of Christ.