



# **Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 50: 1904**

by

*Charles Spurgeon*

## About *Spurgeon's Sermons Volume 50: 1904* by Charles Spurgeon

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## Unbelievers Upbraided

**Note:** A copy of the actual handwritten notes Spurgeon used when preaching this sermon may be viewed on line at <http://www.spurgeon.org/fsl/outline.htm>

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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"He . . . upbraided them with their unbelief."—Mark 16:14.

I SHALL not dwell so much upon this particular instance of the disciples' unbelief as upon the fact that the Lord Jesus upbraided them because of it. This action of his shows us the way in which unbelief is to be treated by us. As our loving Saviour felt it to be right rather to upbraid than to console, he taught us that on some occasions, unbelief should be treated with severity rather than with condolence.

Beloved friends, let us never look upon our own unbelief as an excusable infirmity, but let us always regard it as a sin, and as a great sin, too. Whatever excuse you may at any time make for others,—and I pray you to make excuses for them whenever you can rightly do so,—never make any for yourself. In that case, be swift to condemn. I am not at all afraid that, as a general rule, we shall err on the side of harshness to ourselves. No; we are far too ready to palliate our own wrong-doing, to cover up our own faults and to belittle our own offenses. I very specially urge every believer in Jesus to deal most sternly with himself in this matter of unbelief. If he turns the back of the judicial knife towards others, let him always turn the keen edge of it towards himself. In that direction use your sharpest eye and your most severely critical judgment. If you see any fault in yourself, you may depend upon it that the fault is far greater than it appears to be; therefore, deal more sternly with it. It is a very easy thing for us to get into a desponding state of heart, and to mistrust the promises and faithfulness of God, and yet, all the while, to look upon ourselves as the subjects of a disease which we cannot help, and even to claim pity at the hands of our fellow-men, and to think that they should condole with us, and try to cheer us. Perhaps they should; but, at any rate, we must not think that they should. It will be far wiser for each one of us to feel, "This unbelief of mine is a great wrong in the sight of God. He has never given me any occasion for it, and I am doing him a cruel injustice by thus doubting him. I must not idly sit down, and say, This has come upon me like a fever, or a paralysis, which I cannot help; but I must rather say, 'This is a great sin, in which I must no longer indulge; but I must confess my unbelief, with shame and self-abasement, to think that there should be in me this evil heart of unbelief.'"

Notwithstanding what I said, just now, concerning our dealings with others, I must give very much the same advice with regard to them as to ourselves, though in a somewhat mitigated form. When we see any of our friends falling into sin and unbelief, we must seek to deal wisely with them,—always kindly,—never harshly. Let us reserve all our severity for ourselves, as I have already urged upon you. Still, I am sure that it is quite possible for us to be doing our

fellow-Christians serious harm by excusing their unbelief, and by pitying them for it, instead of pointing out to them, tenderly, yet faithfully, the great sin they are committing by this doubting.

Have you never seen a "coddled" lad? I have seen one, who ought to be in the open air at play, shut in a close room because his parents were fearful that he was delicate, and unable to do as other lads do. He ought to have been taking part in various healthy exercises that would have developed and strengthened every muscle in his body; but, instead of that, he was sitting down, tied to his mother's apron strings, and so was being made weaker than he was before. He was kept in an atmosphere which was not fit for him to breathe because his foolish parents were afraid the fresh air might be too trying for him; and long before he was ill, he was dosed and physicked until he really became ill. Many a child has been murdered by being thus coddled; or, if he has lived to grow up to manhood, he has been a poor, feeble, effeminate creature, because the abundant love, which has been lavished upon him, has been linked with equally abundant folly. You can easily treat Christians, and especially young converts, in the same senseless fashion. If they are unbelieving, you can keep back from them the stern truth about the sinfulness of such a state of heart and mind, because you fear that they will be discouraged if you deal faithfully with them. That is quite as wrong as saying to the unconverted, over and over again, "Only believe," without ever mentioning the need of repentance and regeneration. There is a way of misapplying even the promises of God to unbelieving hearts, and of giving the consolations of the gospel to those who are not in a condition to receive them, as one might give sweetmeats to sick children, and so do them harm. People, who are thus unwisely treated, are apt to remain in the same sad state until their unbelief becomes chronic, and their unhappiness becomes a lifelong burden to them. Sometimes, when a man is in great pain, it is wise to give him something that will afford him even temporary relief; but the better course is, if possible, to strike at the root of his disease, and eradicate it once for all. That should be our method of dealing with the unbelief of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We must make it clear to them that unbelief is no trifle, and that it is a thing for which its owner is not to be pitied, but to be blamed, and to be severely blamed, for it is a most grievous fault and sin. Our Saviour dealt thus with the eleven when he upbraided them because of their unbelief. He did not excuse them, or comfort them, but he upbraided them. Upbraiding does not seem to be in harmony with the usual character of Jesus, does it! Yet, you may depend upon it that it was the right thing for him to do, and the kind thing, too; otherwise, he would not have done it.

Jesus upbraided these disciples of his because of their unbelief upon a very special point on which they ought to have been the first to believe. Many persons had seen their Lord after he had risen from the dead; and the eleven apostles, who ought, by reason of their greater spiritual advantages, and their more intimate companionship with Christ, to have been the readiest to believe the good tidings, were not so; and, therefore, Christ "upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he had risen." Yet these eye-witnesses Peter and John, Cleopas and his companion, and Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the other Mary, and the rest of the holy women,—who had come to the eleven, were their own brethren and sisters in the faith; so Christ might well say to them,—and I daresay he did,—"Why did you doubt their testimony? You did them an injustice by acting in such a manner. They are honest and truthful, and they have told you the truth. You have not been accustomed to doubt their word; so, as you have believed their witness concerning other matters, why did you not believe them in this instance! "Moreover," our Lord might well say, "there were many of them; it was not merely one, who might have been mistaken; but a considerable number saw me, and I spake with them; and they came and

told you that it was even so, yet you did not believe them. The number of the witnesses, and their well-known character, are sure signs that you must have been in a wrong state of heart and mind, not to be able to receive such clear evidence as theirs; and, therefore, you are blameworthy for your unbelief."

In the case of these apostles, unbelief was peculiarly sinful, for they had the promise of their Lord to back up the testimony of his disciples. He had often told them that he would rise again from the dead, and had even foretold the very day of his resurrection, so that the unbelief of the apostles was altogether inexcusable. Yet this very fact, which was a cause of stumbling to the apostles, appears to me to give point and power to the appeal which I make to myself, and to you, against our unbelief. We all believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead; we have no difficulty in accepting that great fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith; all of us, who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, fully endorse Paul's words to the saints in Rome, and say that our Lord "was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." Well, then, brethren and sisters in Christ, if we believe that Jesus rose from the dead, the ground is completely cut from under the feet of unbelief, for his promise is, "Because I live, ye shall live also." If he lives, then the gospel is true, and the promises of the gospel are sure to all who believe in him. If he lives, then he lives to intercede for us; and, through his intercession, every covenant blessing is certain to come to us. Therefore, if we harbour unbelief in our hearts, we are doubly guilty; and if the Saviour were here in bodily presence, though his face would still beam with infinite love to us, I am quite sure that he would, even in sterner tones than he used towards those eleven apostles, upbraid us because of our unbelief. If Thomas will not believe that Christ is risen until he has put his finger into the print of the nails in his hands, and thrust his hand into his Saviour's wounded side, that is bad enough; but it is worse if you, who do believe that he is risen, and who do not doubt any one of the doctrines that he has taught you, still have unbelief mingled with the faith which you do possess. Whether that supposed faith is all true, or not, is more than I can say; but, with so much faith as you profess to have, how can you still continue to doubt?

I want, in this discourse, to upbraid myself, and you also, for any unbelief that we may have harboured, by noticing, first, *the evil of unbelief in itself*; and, then, *the evils that surely flow out of unbelief*.

I. First, then, I have to say to any of God's children who have given way to unbelief in any degree,—YOUR UNBELIEF IS AN EVIL THING IN ITSELF.

This truth will come very closely home to you if you will just *think how you would feel if others disbelieved you*. If anyone were to question your veracity, you would be very vexed; and if you made a promise to any man, and he expressed a doubt as to the fulfillment of it, you would feel hurt; but if those, with whom you are most closely connected, were to disbelieve you, you would feel still more grieved, for you expect absolute confidence from them. If mutual trust were taken away from any family, how unhappy the members of that family would be;—the children suspecting the sincerity of their parents' love,—the wife doubting the reality of her husband's affection,—the husband dubious of his wife's faithfulness! Try to conceive, if you can, what it would be if those, who now call you friend, or child, or husband, or wife, or brother, or sister, should no longer accept what you say as being true. Suppose, also, that you were perfectly conscious that you had never broken your word to them,—that you had faithfully kept every promise that you had made to them, and had been in all things honest, and true, and sincere, would you not feel their doubts and suspicions most, acutely? I am sure you would; they would touch the very apple of your eye, and

cut you to the quick; you could not endure such treatment from them. Then, how can you mete out to the Lord Jesus Christ such treatment as would be so painful to yourself? And, further, how can you expect your child to trust you when you doubt your Saviour? How can you look even to your wife for confidence in you when, if there be some little trouble, or things go somewhat awkwardly, you straightway begin to mistrust your God and Saviour?

Remember, too, that *the sin of your unbelief may be measured by the excellence of the person whom you mistrust*. I said, just now, that, if you were conscious of your absolute sincerity, you would be the more deeply wounded by the suspicion of those who doubted you. What think you then, of the sin of doubting Christ, who cannot lie, who is "the Truth" itself? I know, beloved, that you have a very high opinion of your Lord and Saviour; do you not worship him as Divine? Do you not also feel his truly human sympathy? You know that there is no clause in his everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, which he has not already fulfilled or which he will not fulfill at the appointed time. His incarnation, his life here below, his shameful sufferings, his vicarious death;—all these he promised to undergo, and all these he performed in due season, and he will go right through, to the end, with the great work of your eternal salvation. By the mouth of his servant Jeremiah, the Lord asked, long ago, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" And the Lord Jesus might well say to his professed followers, "Have I been as the barren fig tree was to me when I found on it nothing but leaves?" As he points to the long list of his favors to us, he may well ask, "For which of them do you thus misjudge and mistrust me?" And when he spreads out the whole roll of his life and work before you, he may well enquire, "Upon which part of my life or work do you base your suspicions? What is there in my nature, as Divine and human,—what is there in my character,—what is there in my life below, or in my life above,—that should lead you to question my faithfulness to you, my power to help you, my readiness to sympathize with you, my willingness to bless you!" Why, you are doubting him whom the angels adore and worship! You have felt, sometimes, as if you would like to wash his feet with your tears. How, then, can you ever insult him with your doubts? You have even said that you could die for him; and it has been your great ambition to live for him; yet you cannot trust him! If you have run with the footmen in the matter of these minor trials of your faith, and they have wearied you, what would you do if you had to contend with horsemen as many others have had to do in the day of martyrdom? And if, in the favorable circumstances in which you have been placed, you have doubted your Saviour, what are you likely to do when you are in the swellings of Jordan? Ah, my brethren, when you think of unbelief as aiming her darts at Jesus Christ, the Well-beloved of our soul, surely you will say that it is a shameful sin, and a disgraceful crime against infinite love!

Then, *remember, beloved in the Lord, the relationship in which Jesus Christ stands to you*. You know that, the more closely we are allied to a person, the more painful any suspicion on the part of that person becomes. I have repeatedly used, in this connection, the figure of a child's trust in a parent, a husband's trust in his wife, and the wife's trust in her husband; and you have readily accepted the comparisons because you have felt that the nearness of the relationship would involve a corresponding degree of trust. How near—how very near—we are in kinship to Christ! Are we not married to him? Has he not espoused us unto himself for ever? There is a conjugal union between Christ and his Church of which the marriage bond on earth is but a feeble type. Then, can you who have been renewed in heart by the Holy Spirit, and washed in the blood of the Lamb, doubt him whom your soul loveth? Can you distrust him to whom you are so closely allied? Oh, shame, shame, shame, that want of confidence should come in to mar such a wondrous union as that!

But we are even more closely knit to Christ than the marriage union implies, for "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." I cannot explain that secret, mystical union of which the Scripture speaks; but it is a true union, whatever mystery there may be about it. Then, shall there be such disunion amongst the members of the body that the eye shall begin to doubt the heart, and the hand to mistrust the foot? It would be pitiful if such a state of things could prevail in our bodies; then, what must it be if such a state of things prevails among the members of the mystical body of Christ? Beloved, may God render this unbelief impossible by sending such life floods of grace through all the members of Christ's body that never more shall a single thought of mistrust of our glorious covenant Head enter our minds even for a single instant!

Consider next, I pray you, dear friends, *how many times some of us have doubted our Lord.* The sin of unbelief becomes all the greater because it is so frequently committed. God be thanked that it is not so with all Christians: for there are some who walk in faith and dwell in faith. I suppose that, as birds fly over everybody's head, as doubts fly around all good men's minds; but our old proverb says, "You need not let birds build in your hair," although there are some people, who let doubts come and lodge in their minds, and even dwell in their hearts. We know some persons of this kind, who seem to be very easily led into despondency, and doubt, and mistrust of Christ. Well now, if a man has done this only once, I think he might well say to himself, "I did once question everlasting truth. I did once stain the spotless robe of infinite veracity with a dark blot of suspicion;" and I think that he might find it difficult to forgive himself for having done a thing so vile even once. But when it comes to many times, and when it comes to long periods of doubt and mistrust, it is still worse. I want to press this point home upon all whom it concerns, and I want your consciences to be wide awake, so that, as you recall the many times in which you have thus sinned against your Heavenly Father, and against his blessed Spirit, and against his Divine Son you may recollect that each distinct act of unbelief is a sin,—each act of mistrust is another wounding of the Lord. God grant that we may truly repent as we think of the many times in which we have been thus guilty!

Then there is this further point—*some of these actions have been repetitions of former ones.* For instance, a man is in trouble, and he has doubts concerning the providence of God; but he is delivered, God is gracious to him, and helps him out of his difficulty. Well, now if he falls into a similar trouble, and if he is again guilty of harbouring doubt, this is far worse. If a man should doubt your word the first time you speak to him, you might say, "Well, he does not know me." The second time, you might say, "When he has proved me more, he will trust me." But what shall I say of those, whose hair has a sprinkling of grey in it, and whose Christian experience extends to a score of years, or more,—perhaps, two score,—possibly, three scores. Oh, if you doubt the Lord now, it will be a crying shame! It will not to surprising if some of us act thus, for so did Israel for forty years in the wilderness; but that does not mitigate the evil in our case. It is a desperately evil thing that God should be mistrusted over and over again, and that he should have to say, "How long will it be ere ye believe me?"

I scarcely like to linger on such a sad theme; yet it does our hearts good to be thus upbraided; so, recollect that, *oftentimes our unbelief has come in the teeth of our own assurance to the contrary.* Do you not sometimes catch yourself saying, after a very great mercy, "Well, I never can doubt the Lord again"? When you have had an answer to prayer of a very memorable kind, you have said, "Oh, I must believe in the power of prayer now! For me ever to think that the Lord will deny me,

must be impossible." Yes, in that respect also, we are just like the Israelites, who promised to keep the covenant, yet speedily broke it.

There is also this aggravation of your sin; *although you do not trust the Lord as you should, you do trust your fellow-creatures*. You can believe that lie of the old serpent,—

"The Lord hath forsaken thee quite;

Thy God will be gracious no more;"—

yet you cannot so readily believe the oath and promise of God. If an earthly friend were to say to you, "I will help you," how readily you would jump at his offer! If there be an arm of flesh near, how cheerfully you lean upon it; and, though, perhaps, there be nothing for you to stay yourself upon but a broken reed, you think it is a strong staff, and throw all your weight upon it. It is quite true that ungodly men, who have no faith, generally have any amount of credulity. They cannot believe the truth, but they can believe lies to any extent. So is it, alas! with God's own people when they get off the track of faith. They seem to become credulous concerning the things seen, which are temporal, in proportion as they become dubious of the things unseen, which are eternal. Is not this a sin of the greatest blackness? Thou canst not trust thy husband, but thou canst trust a flatterer who deceives thee! Thou canst not trust thy God, but thou makest idol gods unto thyself, and trustest to them. Thou canst not stay thyself on Jehovah, but thou canst stay thyself on Egypt. Thou canst stay thyself on the promise of man who is but as a moth which is soon crushed; but as for him who made the heavens and the earth, and all things that are, thou canst not rely upon him. I feel as if I could sit down and cover my face for shame, when I think of those occasions wherein I have been guilty of this sin. Perhaps the best thing we could all do would be to go home, and fall on our knees, and ask our blessed Saviour to wash away all this unbelief, and not to believe us when we talk about doubting, but only to believe that, as he knows all things, he knows that, after all, we do trust him.

II. Now, with great brevity, I have to speak upon the second point, which is, THE MANY EVILS WHICH COME OUT OF UNBELIEF TO THOSE OF US WHO LOVE THE LORD.

Brethren and sisters, it is enough of evil—if there were no more,—that *unbelief is so cruel to Christ and grieves his Holy Spirit so much*. I should but repeat myself if I reminded you how mistrust grieves you; and, speaking after the manner of men, in the same fashion it grieves the Holy Spirit. He dwells in you; shall he dwell in you to be grieved by you? He assuages your grief; will you cause him grief? Your vexations vanish because he is the Comforter; will you vex the Comforter? And what can vex him more than suspecting the ever-faithful heart of Christ? That is evil enough,—to wound Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Next, remember,—though this is a more selfish argument,—*how much unrest and misery unbelief has caused to yourself*. You have never had half as many trials from God as you have manufactured for yourself. Death, which you so much dread, is nothing compared with the thousand deaths that you have died through the fear of death. You make a whip for yourself, and you mix bitter cups for yourself, by your unbelief. There is quite enough trial for you to bear, and God will help you to bear it; but you put away the helping hand when you are unbelieving, and then you increase your own burden. Oh, you can sing, even by the rivers of Babylon, if you have but faith! you may lie on your sick bed, and feel great pain; yet your spirit shall not smart, but shall dance away your pangs, if your heart be but looking in simple confidence to Christ; and you shall die, as the negro said his master died,—"full of life,"—if you have true faith in Jesus. But if faith shall

fail you, oh then you are distressed when there is no cause for distress, and full of fear where no fear is!

And, then, *how much you lose, in other things, besides happiness!* A thousand promises are missed because there is not the faith to claim them. There are the caskets, and you have the keys; yet you do not put the keys into the locks to open them. There are Joseph's granaries, and you are hungry; but you do not go unto Joseph, and show your confidence in him by asking for what you need. Ye are not straitened in God, but in yourselves. If you believe not, you shall not be established, neither shall your prayers prevail, nor shall you grow in grace. If you believe not, your experience shall not be of that high and lofty kind that otherwise it might have been. We live down here in the marsh and the mist, when, had we faith, we might live in the everlasting sunshine. We are down below in the dungeons, fretting under imaginary chains, when the key of promise is in our bosom, which will open every door in Doubting Castle. If we will but use it, we may get away to the tops of the mountains, and see the New Jerusalem, and the land which is very far off.

Further, *unbelief weakens us for all practical purposes.* What can the man who is unbelieving do? O brothers and sisters in Christ, it is a terrible thing to think how much work there is that falls flat because it is not done in faith. You saw the trees when they were covered with bloom; there seemed to be a promise of much fruit; but there were chilling winds, and sharp frosts, and so, perhaps, only one in a hundred of the blossoms ever turned to fruit. The tree of the Church seems, at times, covered with beautiful blossoms; what can be more lovely to the sight? But the blossoms do not knit—faith is the bee that carries the pollen, it is faith that fructifies the whole, and makes it truly fruitful unto God. What might my sermons not have done had I believed my Master more? You, Sunday-school teacher, may say, "Had I taught in greater faith, I might have won my scholars." Or you may say, "Had I gone to my visitings of the poor and the sick in the strength of the Lord, who knows what I might have done for him?" Faith is the Nazarite lock of Samson; if it be shorn away, Samson is weak as other men. Then, as to suffering, wonderful is the power of faith there. If you are trusting your Heavenly Father, believing that all is right that seems most wrong, that everything that happens is ordered or permitted by him, and that his grace will sweeten every bitter cup, you can suffer patiently; and, as your tribulations abound, so will your consolations abound in Christ Jesus. Like the ark of Noah, as the waters deepen, you will rise upon them, and get nearer to heaven in proportion as the great floods increase.

Unbelief, in any Christian, no doubt *has a very injurious effect upon other Christians.* There are some, who are like sickly sheep, which—

"Infect the flock,

And poison all the rest."

Especially is it so, dear brethren, if you happen to be in office in the church, or to be doing any prominent work for Christ. If the commander-in-chief trembles, the army is already conquered; if the captain begins to fear, fear will take possession of every soldier's heart in his company. Was it not grand of Paul, in the shipwreck, when all others were dismayed, and thought they should go to the bottom, but he said, "Have no fear, sirs," and he bade them eat, as he ate,—calmly giving thanks to God before them all? Why, Paul saved them all by his calm confidence in God. If we have but faith, we shall strengthen our brethren; and if we have it not, we shall weaken them. I am sure, too, that *the influence of unbelief in Christians, upon the unconverted, is very serious indeed.* If we do not play the man in times of trial,—if we do not show them what faith in God can do,—they will think that there is nothing in it. And suppose, brethren, you should make anyone think there is

nothing in religion, how sad that would be! When the devil wants a friend, surely he could not find one more able to do him service than a child of God who is full of mistrust. The children say, "Our father only trusts God for bread when there is plenty in the cupboard." And the servants say, "The master is only happy in the Lord when he is in good health." And those who know our business affairs say, "Oh, yes! So-and-so is a great believer; but, then, he has a big balance at his banker's; you should see him when trade is bad; you should see him when there are bad debts; and you will find that he is not a bit more a believer in Jesus Christ than any of the rest of us. He is a fair-weather Christian; he is like the flowers that open when the sun shines; but take away the summer prosperity, and you will see but little of his religion." Let it not be so with any of us, but may God deliver us from this tremendous evil of unbelief!

HEBREWS 11:1-13; AND 32-40.

Verses 1, 2. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elder obtained a good report.*

So it was written, in the olden time, that believers "obtained a good report;" and this second verse shows that they obtained it by their faith. The best part of the report about them is, that they believed their God, and believed all that was revealed to them by his Word and his Spirit.

3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

The facts about creation must be the subject of faith. It is true that they can be substantiated, by the argument from design, and in other ways; still, for a wise purpose as I believe, God has not made even that matter of the creation of the universe perfectly clear to human reason, so there is room for the exercise of faith. Men like to have everything laid down according to the rules of mathematical precision, but God desires them to exercise faith; and, therefore, he has not acted according to their wishes.

4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*

The first of the long line of martyrs triumphed by faith; and if you are to be strong to bear witness for God, you must be made strong by the same power which wrought so effectually in Abel. If, like his, your life is to be a speaking life,—a life which shall speak even out of the grave,—its voice must be the voice of faith.

5. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*

It is faith that muzzles the mouth of death, and takes away the power of the sepulcher. If any man, who had not been a believer, had been translated as Enoch was, we should have been able to point to a great feat accomplished apart from faith. It has never been so; for this, which was one of the greatest things that was ever done,—to leap from this life into another, and to overleap the grave altogether,—was only achieved "by faith."

6, 7. *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet,*

These are the things with which faith always deals;—not with the things that are seen or are apprehensible by the senses or the feelings.

7. *Moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

So you see that faith has a condemning power towards an ungodly world. You do not need to be constantly telling worldlings that they are doing wrong; let them see clearly the evidence of your faith, for that will bear the strongest conceivable witness against their unbelief and sin, even as Noah, by his faith, "condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

8. *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

That is, surely, the very masterpiece of faith. God bade Abraham go forth from his native land, he believed that God knew where he was to go though he did not himself know; so he left the direction of his wanderings entirely in the Lord's hands, and obeyed, and "went out, not knowing whither he went." We are not to ask for full knowledge before we will be obedient to the will of the Lord; but we are to obey God in the dark, even as Abraham did.

9. *By faith he adjourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:*

It is one of the great evidences of true faith for her to keep on, to continue, to abide, without any visible signs or tokens of what she knows is hers. The life of faith is wonderful, but so also is the walk of faith. Her walk has much about it that is mysterious; she knows that the land she treads on belongs to her; and yet, in another sense, she cannot claim a solitary foot of it. She knows that she is at home, even as Abraham was in his own land; yet like him, she knows herself to be a sojourner in a strange land, and is quite content to be so.

10. *For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

What a depth of meaning there is in those five words, "a city which hath foundation,"—as if all other cities had none! They come, and they go, as if they were molehills raised on the surface of the earth, or little mounds of sand made by the children's wooden spades upon the seashore, which the next tide will wash away. What vast numbers of cities have been destroyed already! We are constantly picking up the relics of them, but there is, blessed be the name of the Lord, "a city which hath foundations," a city founded on eternal power, and we are on our way to that city, I hope.

11, 12. *Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.*

Perhaps the reference is to Abraham, who was as good as dead, being so old; or to Isaac, who was as good as dead, for he was laid upon the altar, and was practically "offered up" as a sacrifice unto the Lord. There were many deaths to work against the life of faith; yet life triumphed over death after all.

13. *These all died in faith,*

That is the epitaph which God has carved over the resting-place of his faithful ones: "These all died in faith." Will this be the record concerning all of us, "These all died in faith"?

13. *Not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

The chapter is a very long one so I must condense it, as the apostle himself did when he came to the 32nd verse; there was so much to be said that he added,—

32. *And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:*

There are some names, in this chapter, which we should hardly have expected to see there, the characters mentioned having been so disfigured by serious faults, and flaws, and failings; but the distinguishing feature of faith was there in every instance, and especially in the case of Samson. Perhaps there was no more childlike faith, in any man, than there was in him; who but a man full of faith would have hurled himself upon a thousand men with no weapon in his hand but the jawbone of an ass? There was a wondrous confidence in God in that weak, strong man, which though it does not excuse his faults, yet nevertheless puts him in the ranks of the believers. Happy is the man or woman who believeth in God. There were multitudes of others, beside those whom the apostle named,—

33. *Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness,*

Is that as great an exploit as subduing kingdoms? Yes, that it is; to have, by faith, preserved a holy character, in such a world of temptation as this, is a far grander achievement than to have conquered any number of kingdoms by force of arms.

33, 34. *Obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong,*

Do you notice how, every now and then, there is the mention of a feat which seems altogether beyond you; but then there follows one, in which you can be a partaker with these heroes and heroines of faith? It may be that you have never "quenched the violence of fire;" yet, often enough, it has been true of you that, by faith, "out of weakness" you have been "made strong." Others—

34, 35. *Waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance: that they might obtain a better resurrection:*

What wondrous faith it was which sustained the saints under the awful tortures to which they were subjected! The story harrows one's heart even to read it; what must it have been actually to endure?

36-39. *And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented, (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:*

These worthies lived before Christ came; but, since then, equally noble exploits have been performed by the heroes and heroines of faith. The Christian martyrs have shown the extremity of human endurance when they have been sustained by faith; and the bead-roll of Christian heroes, since their Lord ascended to heaven, is longer and even brighter than that of the faithful ones who came before them in the earlier dispensation.

40. *God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*

The new dispensation is necessary to complete the old, the New Testament is the complement of the Old Testament, and New Testament saints join hands with Old Testament elders. Let us all be worthy of our high pedigree; and may God grant that, if the saints of these latter days are to perfect the history of the Church of Christ, the end may not be less heroic than the beginning was! A true poem should gather force as it grows, and its waves of thought should roll in with greater power as it nears its climax; so should the mighty poem of faith's glorious history increase in depth

and power as it gets nearer to its grand consummation, that God may be glorified yet more and more, through all his believing children. So may it be! Amen.

## An Instructive Truth

A Sermon

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"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."—Jeremiah 10:23.

This declaration follows after Jeremiah's lamentation over the Lord's ancient people, who were about to be carried captive into Babylon. The prophet speaks of a fact that was well known to him. It is always well, brethren, to know the truth, and to know it so certainly that you are able to remember it just when you most need it. There are some people, who are very much like that foolish captain of whom we have heard, who had a good anchor, but he left it at home when he went to sea, so it was no use to him. So, these people know what would comfort them, but they do not recollect it in the time of their distress. Jeremiah says, "O Lord, I know," and he utilizes his knowledge as a source of comfort in his hour of need.

What Jeremiah knew was this,—that the affairs of this world are not under the control of men, however much they may imagine that they are. There is a supreme authority to theirs, and a power which rules, and overrules, and works according to its own beneficent will, whatever men may desire or determine to do. Nebuchadnezzar was about to carry the Jews away from the land which flowed with milk and honey to his own far distant country; but the prophet consoled himself with the reflection that, whatever Nebuchadnezzar meant to do, he was only the instrument in the hands of God for the accomplishment of the divine purpose. He proposed, but God disposed. The tyrant of Babylon thought that he was working out his own will, yet he was really carrying out the will of God in chastising the idolatrous and rebellious nation. This was Jeremiah's consolation, "I do not know what Nebuchadnezzar may do; but I do know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' I know that, in God's eternal purposes, every step of Judah's way is mapped out, and he will make it all work for his own glory and the good of his chosen people in the end."

Child of God, will you, for a moment, reflect upon the overruling power of God even in the case of the most mighty and wicked of men? They sin grossly, and what they do is done of their own free will, and the responsibility for it lies at their own door. That we never can forget, for the free agency of man is a self-evident truth; but, at the same time, God is omnipotent, and he is still working out his wise designs, as he did of old, in the whirlwind of human wrath, in the tempest of human sin, and even in the dark mines of human ambition and tyranny, all the while displaying his sovereign will among men even as the potter forms the vessels on the wheel according to his will.

This truth ought to be remembered by us, because it tends to take from us all fear of man. Why shouldst thou, O believer, be afraid of a man that shall die, or the son of man, who is but a worm? Thou art, as a child of God, under divine protection; so, who is he that shall harm thee while thou

art a follower of that which is good? Remember the ancient promise, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord." The most powerful enemy of the Church can do nothing without God's permission. He can put a bit in the mouth of a leviathan, and do with him as he pleaseth. The almighty God is Master and Lord even over the men who imagine that all power is in their hands. And while this truth should banish our fear of man, it should also ensure our submission to the will of God. Suppose that the Lord allows Nebuchadnezzar to devastate the land that he gave to his people by covenant; it is God who permits it, therefore think not thou so much of the instrument employed by him as of the hand in which that instrument is held. Art thou afflicted, poor soul, by some hard unkind spirit? Remember that God permits thee to be so tried, and be not angry with that which is only the second cause of thy trouble, but believe that the Lord permits this to happen to thee for thy good, and therefore submit thyself to him. A dog, when he is struck with a stick, usually bites the stick; if he had more sense, he would try to bite the man who holds the stick. So, your contention must not be against the instrument of your affliction. If there be any contention, it is really against God; and you would not, I trust, think of contending with your Maker. Rather, say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." Let your back be bared to the rod, and look up to your Heavenly Father's face, and say, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." This truth ought also to strengthen our faith. When fear goes, faith comes in. It is an easy matter to trust God when everything goes smoothly; but genuine faith trusts God in a storm. When the land of Judah was hedged about by God's providence, and no enemy ventured to set foot upon the sacred soil, it was easy for a prophet to praise the Lord; but it was quite another matter to trust God when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the villages, besieged the cities, and by-and-by, took them, and gave them up to utter destruction, and carried away their inhabitants into captivity. To trust in God then, was not so easy; yet that was the time for the display of real faith. Faith in the storm is true faith; faith in a calm may be, or may not be, genuine faith. Summer-weather faith may be true, or may not be true; but wintry faith, that can bring forth fruit when the snows are deep, and the North wind blows, is the faith of God's elect. It proves that it has divine vitality in it, because it can master the circumstances which would have utterly crushed the faith which appertains only to flesh and blood. It is a severe trial, to a child of God, when he is mocked at home,—when someone, who ought to be kind to him, is quite the opposite,—when the ties of nature seem only to intensify the hatred that is felt against the heir of grace,—when Ishmael mocks Isaac, and grieves him continually. That is a severe trial, but it affords the opportunity for the tried one to recall this truth, that God has all things in his hand, and that this trial is only permitted, in his wisdom and love, for some good purpose towards his own child. It is still true that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose;" and that "no good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly." If your enemy triumphs over you for a time, you should say to him, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise." May the Holy Spirit help you so to do! The way of the persecutor is, after all, not left absolutely to his own will, but there is another and a higher will that overrules all.

We will not, however, tarry longer over the consideration of the context so far as it applies to Nebuchadnezzar, and other adversaries of the people of God, but we will endeavor to learn the lesson that is taught us in the latter clause of the text: "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." And, firstly, I will try to prove to you that *these words are true*; and, secondly, that *these words are instructive*.

I. First, then, THESE WORDS ARE TRUE: "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

For, first, although man is an active individual, so that he can walk, he cannot direct his steps, *because there may be some obstacle in his way which he cannot surmount, and which he will change the whole course of his life.* He may have determined, in his own mind, that he will do this or that, and that he will go here and there; but he cannot foresee every circumstance that may happen to him, and there may be circumstances that will entirely alter the direction of his life; there may be unexpected difficulties, or what many call accidents, which are really providence's, which will prevent us from doing what we have resolved to do. Take the case of a young man, who is just beginning business life; though he is active and strong, is it in him to direct his steps? I know it was not in me to direct my own steps. I had certain plans concerning my life course, but they have not been fulfilled. No doubt, the highest desire I ever cherished has been granted to me; but my first plans and purposes were not realized. I am not, to-day, where I hoped to have been; there were difficulties in the way, which made it impossible for me to get there. I expect others have had a similar experience. A young man may try to choose his path in life, but we all know how seldom, if ever, he can get exactly what he wants. Perhaps he goes into a certain house of business, and he says, "I shall work my way up till I get to the top." Yet, how frequently it happens that something occurs, which jerks him off the line of rails which he had laid down for himself, and he has to in quite a different direction. The path he had chosen was, apparently, a very proper one for him to choose; perhaps, he spent a good deal of earnest thought upon the matter, and, possibly, also a good deal of prayer; yet he finds, as many others have found, that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." It is possible that the young man prospers so that he is able to go into business on his own account; but the same lesson has to be learned under different circumstances. He could not foresee what was going to happen, so he had purchased certain goods, relying upon an expected rise in the market; but there was a sudden fall, instead of a rise, and he became a loser, not a gainer. Going into business is often like going to sea; one may be much tossed about, and possibly may be wrecked, before reaching the desired haven. Many a man has found that he cannot get what he most confidently reckons upon.

Another man fails in health. He might have prospered; but just when the full vigour of his physical strength was needed, and the greatest clearness of his mental vision was required, he was laid aside. As he sickened, he also became depressed in spirit, as he realized that his path must be that of an invalid, and perhaps of a poor man; yet he thought his career would have been that of a strong man, who soon would have reached a competence. I am sure that I must be addressing many, who know very well, from their own experience, that it is not of the slightest use for a man to say, "I will do this," or "I will do that," because something or other may occur, which will altogether prevent you from doing that which seems simple enough now. The mariner reckons on reaching port at a certain day or hour, but the wind may shift, or many things may happen to delay him. The mariner, however, can reckon even better than you can, for he has his chart, and he can find his way; he knows where the shoals are, and the quicksands, and the rocks, and where the deep channels run; but you do not know anything about your future life; you are sailing over a sea that no ship's keel has ever ploughed before. God knows all about it; everything is present to his all-seeing eye, but it is not present to your eye. It is not possible for a man to direct his own way absolutely, for he has not the power to do it; let him strive and struggle as he may, he must often be made to feel this.

Perhaps some of you are just now in this condition. Your affairs have got into a tangle, and you do not at all know how to unravel it. You are like a man in a maze or a labyrinth. You wish to take the course which is according to the will of God; but whether you should turn to the right hand or to the left, you do not know.

Now, you have begun to realize what was always true, but what you did not perceive before, that is, that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." You cannot direct your own way; you are quite perplexed as to which of two courses you should take. If this one be taken, it involves one form of trouble; and if the other course be chosen, that involves another kind of difficulty. What are you to do? Well, you know that the wisest thing for you to do is to take the matter to the Lord, and ask him to direct you. That is what you ought to do in every case; that ought to be the constant habit of your soul,—to look for the fiery-cloudy pillar which alone can guide you safely over the trackless waste of life.

In the second place, man ought not to direct his way according to his own will, because *his will is naturally evil*. Ungodly men think that they can direct their own way. Ah, sirs! If you do that, you will direct your way down to the deeps of destruction. He who is his own guide is guided by a fool. He that trusteth to his own understanding proves that he has no understanding. If you will be your own director, you will be directed to the place where you will have bitter cause to rue it for ever and ever. If a man, starting out in life, says, "I shall follow my own will. I will say to my passions, æYou shall be indulged;' and to my desires, æEat, drink, and be merry;' and to my soul, æTrouble not thyself with solemn and serious things; leave eternity till it comes, and make thou the best thou canst of time:' I will direct my own way as pleasure shall guide me, or as self-interest shall guide me," ùif you, sir, talk like that, I pray you to remember that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps;" and it ought not to be, for man is quite incompetent to perform such a task as that, because he has a natural bias towards that which is evil,—an inclination towards that which will be injurious to him, and to others also, and which will make him miss the chief end of his being, which is, to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.

I should like, before proceeding further with my subject, to urge everyone, who has hitherto depended upon himself, to pause, and lift up his heart to heaven, and say, "Gracious Spirit, thou shalt be my Guide, from this time, and forever." For, young man, young woman, you will surely run upon the rocks, ere long, if you take the tiller of your life's vessel into your own hands. With such a heart as yours, you cannot expect to go right without the grace of God. The doctrine of the depravity of the human race, is not merely an article in the creed; it is a matter of everyday experience. There is in you, by nature, a tendency to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter,—to put darkness for light, and light for darkness; and though you may think that you may have a preference for good,—and it is possible that you have a preference for some forms of good,—yet there are critical points where self seeks to rule, where the weakness of your natural disposition will be discovered, sooner or later, and where the evil that lurks within your flesh will prove to be your ruin. I charge you, sons and daughters of Adam, to remember that, since your father, Adam, even in his state of innocence, could not direct his own way aright, but lost paradise for us all, there is no hope that, in your fallen state, you can find your way back to paradise. Nay, but you will keep on wandering further, and further, and further from the way of peace and holiness, for "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

Let me give another meaning to the text, and still seek to prove it at the same time. It is not, and it ought not to be in man that walketh to direct his steps, because, not only is he naturally

inclined to evil, but *even when grace has renewed his nature, his judgment is so fallible that it is a great mistake for him to attempt to direct his own way.* Dear brother or sister in Christ, the stony heart of unbelief has been removed from you, and you have had a new heart and a right spirit put within you; and, now, the living and incorruptible seed that is in you makes you seek after that which is good and right; but if you, even now, shall trust to your own judgment, you will find yourself brought into a thousand sorrows. Ah, my brother, you are an experienced Christian man, and others look up to you, and ask direction from you; but if you are really experienced, you will often say to them, "God helping me, I can direct you; but, as for myself, I feel that I have need of a director quite as much as the youngest babe in the family of God." Does not every man, who is truly wise, feel himself to be increasingly a fool apart from divine guidance, and is it not a token of growth in wisdom and grace when a man's self-confidence continues to grow less and less? Distrust yourself, dear friend, for you accurately gauge your own judgment when you do that. It is about little matters that wise men generally make their grosser mistakes. In what he considers a difficult matter, the wise Christian man always has resort to God in prayer; but when he gets what he regards as a very simple thing, which is perfectly clear, and which he thinks he can himself decide; then his folly is speedily discovered. He is like the Israelites were with the Gibeonites; they said, in effect, if not words, "We do not need to pray about this matter. We must not make treaties with the Canaanites, but these men are not Canaanites, that is quite clear. We heard them say that they had come from a far country, and when we looked at their shoes we knew that they spoke the truth. They told us that they were quite new when they put them on, yet now they are old and clouted; they must have come a great many miles, you may depend upon it. And their bread—did you notice that? It has the blue mold all over it; we should not like to eat a mouthful of it, yet they told us that it was quite new when they started. There is no doubt that they are distinguished foreigners, who have come from a far country, so let us strike hands with them, and make a covenant with them." And so they did, for the case seemed so clear to them that they asked no counsel from God; and therein Israel made a great mistake. So, brothers and sisters, whenever any case appears to be very clear to you, be sure then to say, "Let us pray about it." You know the old proverb, "When it is fine weather, carry an umbrella. When it is wet, you can do as you like." So, when any case seems to be quite clear, pray over it. When it is more difficult, I dare not say that you may do as you like about praying then, unless I say it in the spirit of the proverb, which would imply that you would be sure to pray then. When you feel certain that you cannot go wrong, you certainly will go wrong unless you ask counsel of God about the matter. That was a good plan of the old Scotchman, who, when anything was in dispute, used to say, "Reach down yon Bible;" and when that was brought down, and the Scripture read, and prayer offered, the good man felt that he could see his way, and could go with a firm step along the path to which the Lord had directed him. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," for his judgment is fallible.

I think there is another meaning to be given to the text, for the gracious man feels that he must not direct his own steps, *because he cannot take even a step in the right way apart from divine help.* How can he talk about directing his own steps when he is absolutely dependent upon the grace of God for every step he takes? O brothers and sisters, if the Lord were to help us, by his grace, until we got up to the doorstep of heaven, we should never be able to get in unless he gave us the grace to take the last step! You cannot direct your own steps, for you are a cripple, and cannot even take one step except as strength is given you from on high. You are like a ship upon the sea; you can make no progress except as the breath of the Divine Spirit fills the sails of your barque. How can

you direct your own way when you have no power to go in it, and are dependent upon God for everything? I pray you to confess your dependence, and not to talk of directing your own steps.

I must give you just one thought more under this head. *He that walketh need not think of directing his own steps, for there is One who will direct them for him.* What if sin inclines us to take the wrong path, and if a feeble judgment makes us err through inadvertence? There is no need for us to choose our own lot; but we may bow before the Lord, and say, "Thou shalt choose our inheritance for us." The choice is difficult for you, my brother; then do not choose your own way, but leave it to him who seeth the end from the beginning, and who is sure to make the wise choice. The burden of life is heavy, my sister, then do not try to carry it, but "cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." Let it not be your choice, but let it be God's choice. That was a wise answer of a good old Christian woman, when she was asked whether she would choose to live or to die. She said she had no choice in the matter, but that she left it with the Lord. "But", said one, "suppose the Lord put it to your choice, which would you select?" "Neither," she replied; "I would ask him not to let me choose, but to choose for me so that it should be as he willed, not as I willed." Oh, if we could but once abandon our own choosing, and say to the Lord, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," how much more happy we might be! We should not be troubled by the thought that we could not direct our own steps, but we should be glad of it, because our very weakness would entitle us to cry unto the Lord, "Now that I cannot direct my own way, what I know not teach thou me."

II. Time fails me, and therefore I will close my discourse by briefly mentioning the practical lessons of the text in order to prove to you that THESE WORDS ARE INSTRUCTIVE. It seems to me that they are instructive if we use them thus.

First, *avoid all positive resolutions about what you mean to do*, remembering that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Do not forget that the apostle James says about this matter, "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain, whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow." If you do make any plans, always make them in pencil, and have your indiarubber handy, so that you can rub them out quickly. Much mischief comes of making them in ink, and regarding them as permanent, and saying, "This is what I am sure I shall do." Cast iron breaks easily, so do not have any cast-iron regulations for your life. Do not say, "That is my plan, and I shall keep to it whatever happens." Be ready to alter your plan as God's providence indicates that alteration would be right. I have known people who have been very much given to change; I cannot commend them, for I remember that Solomon said, "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place." So, do not be in a hurry to wander. On the other hand I have known some persons, that resolve that they will never move at all. Do not make such a resolution as that, but recollect that, although "a rolling stone gathers no moss," it is equally true that "a sitting hen gets no barley;" and believe that there may come a time when it will be right for you to move. Do not make up your mind either that you will move, or that you will not move, but wait for guidance from God as to what he would have you do.

The next thing is, *never be to sanguine in your expectations*. I suppose we must have expectations; that old fashioned benediction, "Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed," is very difficult to gain. Expect that, if God has promised you anything, he will be true to his word; but, beyond that, do not expect anything beneath the moon; for, if you do, you will be sure to be disappointed sooner or later. It is of the man whose heart is fixed, trusting

in the Lord, that it is said, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings;" but if his heart had been fixed merely on the attainment of certain worldly ends, he would have been overwhelmed when the evil tidings came. As to anything in this world, let this be the rule by which you are governed, "Having food and raiment, be therewith content," and never cherish too sanguine expectations.

Next, *avoid all security as to the present*. If you have anything that you prize very highly, hold it very loosely, for you may easily lose it. Read the word "mortal" plainly imprinted on the brows of all your children. Look into the dear eyes that are to you like wells in the desert, and remember that they may be closed in less than an hour, and the light of life be gone from them. Your beloved one and you yourself are alike mortal, and either of you may soon be taken from the other. Have you property? remember that wealth has wings, and that it flies away, like a bird upon swift pinions. Have you health? Then think what a marvelous mercy it is that—

"A harp of thousand strings  
Should keep in tune so long;"—

and remember that, very soon, those strings may be all jarring, and some of them may be broken. Hold everything earthly with a loose hand; but grasp eternal things with a death-like grip. Grasp Christ in the power of the spirit; grasp God, who is your everlasting portion, and your unfailing joy. As for other things, hold them as though you held them not, even as Paul says, "It remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none;... and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." Of everything below, it is wise for us to say, "This is not my abiding portion." It is very necessary to say this, and to realize that it is true, for everything here is covered with bird-lime, and the birds of paradise get stuck to it unless they are very watchful. Mind what you are doing, you prosperous people, you who have nice homes, you who are investing your money in the funds; mind that you do not get bird-limed. There is nothing permanently for you here, after all. Your home is in heaven; your home is not here; and if you find your treasure here, your heart will be here also; but it must not be so. You must keep all earthly treasures out of your heart, and let Christ be your treasure, and let him have your heart.

The next observation I would make is this,—*Bow before the divine will in everything*. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Why should it be? O Lord, thou art Master, thou art King; then why should we wish to have our own way? It is right that the servant should take the master's place? There are some of you who are in trouble, and probably your chief trouble arises from the fact that you will not absolutely submit to the Lord's will. I pray that the Holy Spirit may enable you to do so, for trouble loses all its sting when the troubled one yields to God. If you had directed your own way, and this trouble had come upon you because of the choice that you had made, you might have cause to be distressed; but as the Lord has so directed and arranged your affairs, why should you be cast down? My dear friend, you know—or, at any rate, you ought to know—that you cannot be supreme; you must be content to be second. You must say to the Lord, "Thy will, not mine, be done." You will have to say it sooner or later; and if you are a child of God, you ought to have said it long ago, so say it at once. I heard one who, I thought, was a Christian, say, "I cannot think that God was right in taking away my dear mother from me." I replied, "My sister, you must not talk like that." Perhaps someone else says, "I did feel that it was hard when my dear child was taken from me." Yes, my dear friend, you may have felt that it was hard, but you ought to have felt that it was right. God must be free to do as he pleases, and he always does what is right; therefore, you must submit to his will, whatever he pleases to do.

My last observation is,—*Pray about everything*. Remember what Paul wrote to the Phillipians, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Pray about everything; I make no exception to this. Pray about waking in the morning, and pray about falling asleep at night. Pray about any great event in your life, but pray equally about what you call the minor events. Pray as Jacob did when he crossed the brook Jabbok; but do not forget to pray when there is no angry Esau near, and no special danger to fear. The simplest thing, that is not prayed over, may have more evil in it than what appears to be the direst evil when once it has been brought to God in prayer. I pray that all of you, who love the Lord, may commit yourselves afresh to Christ this very hour. I wish to do myself, saying, "My Master, here am I; take me, and do as thou wilt with me. Use me for thy glory in any way that thou pleasest. Deprive me of every comfort, if so I shall the more be able to honour thee. Let my choicest treasures be surrendered if thy sovereign will shall so ordain." Let every child of God make a complete surrender here and now, and ask for grace to stand to it. Your greatest sorrow will come when you begin to be untrue to your full surrender to the Lord; so may you never prove untrue to it!

## Holiness Demanded

A Sermon

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"Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."—Hebrews 12:14.

ONE feels most happy when blowing the trumpet of jubilee, proclaiming peace to broken hearts, freedom to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. But God's watchman has another trumpet, which he must sometimes blow; for thus saith the Lord unto him, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain." Times there are when we must ring the tocsin; men must be startled from their sleep, they must be roused up to enquire, "What are we? Where are we? Whither are we going?" Nor is it altogether amiss for the wisest virgins to look to the oil in their vessels, and for the soundest Christians to be sometimes constrained to examine the foundations of their hope, to trace back their evidences to the beginning, and make an impartial survey of their state before God. Partly for this reason, but with a further view to the awakening and stirring up of those who are destitute of all holiness, I have selected for our topic, "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

There has been a desperate attempt made by certain Antinomians to get rid of the injunction which the Holy Spirit here means to enforce. They have said that this is the imputed holiness of Christ. Do they not know, when they so speak, that, by an open perversion, they utter that which is false? I do not suppose that any man in his senses can apply that interpretation to the context, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness." Now, the holiness meant is evidently one that can be followed like peace; and it must be transparent to any ingenuous man that it is something which is the act and duty of the person who follows it. We are to follow peace; this is practical peace, not the peace made for us, but "the fruit of righteousness which is sown in peace of them that make peace." We are to follow holiness,—this must be practical holiness; the opposite of impurity, as it is written, "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." The holiness of Christ is not a thing to follow; I mean, if we look at it imputatively. That we have at once; it is given to us the moment we believe. The righteousness of Christ is not to be followed; it is bestowed upon the soul in the instant when it lays hold of Christ Jesus. This is another kind of holiness. It is, in fact, as every one can see who chooses to read the connection, practical, vital holiness which is the purport of this admonition. It is conformity to the will of God, and obedience to the Lord's command. It is, in fine, the Spirit's work in the soul, by which a man is made like God, and becomes a partaker of the divine nature, being delivered from the corruption which is in the world through lust. No straining, no hacking at the text can alter it. There it stands, whether men like it or not. There are some who, for special reasons best known to themselves, do not like it, just as no thieves ever like policemen or gaols; yet there it stands, and it means no other than what it says: "Without holiness,"—practical, personal, active, vital holiness,—"no man shall see the Lord." Dealing with

this solemn assertion, fearfully exclusive as it is, shutting out as it does so many professors from all communion with God on earth, and all enjoyment of Christ in heaven, I shall endeavour, first, *to give some marks and signs whereby a man may know whether he hath this holiness or not*; secondly, *to give sundry reasons by way of improvement of the solemn fact*, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord;" and then, thirdly, to plead hard, in Christ's stead, with those who are lovers of gain, that they may bethink themselves ere time be over, and opportunity past.

I. First, then, brethren, ye are anxious to know whether ye have holiness or not. Now, if our text said that, without perfection of holiness, no man, could have any communion with Christ, it would shut every one of us out, for no one, who knows his own heart, ever pretends to be perfectly conformed to God's will. It does not say, "Perfection of holiness," mark; but "holiness." This holiness is a thing of growth. It may be in the soul as the grain of mustard-seed, and yet not developed; it may be in the heart as a wish and a desire, rather than anything that has been fully realized,—a groaning, a panting, a longing, a striving. As the Spirit of God waters it, it will grow till the mustard-seed shall become a tree. Holiness, in a regenerate heart, is but an infant; it is not matured,—perfect it is in all its parts, but not perfect in its development. Hence, when we find many imperfections and many failings in ourselves, we are not to conclude that, therefore, we have no interest in the grace of God. This would be altogether contrary to the meaning of the text. As it is not so much my present purpose to show what this holiness is as what it is not, I think, while I am endeavouring to undeceive those who have not this holiness, those who are not condemned may reasonably draw some comfortable inferences as to their own pursuit of this inestimable grace.

Well, now, let us note four sorts of people who try to get on without holiness. First, there is *the Pharisee*. The Pharisee goes to work with outward ceremonies. He pays tithes of all that he possesses,—his anise, his mint, his cummin,—everything, even to the tithe of his parsley-bed, he gives. He gives alms to the poor, he wears his phylacteries, and makes broad the borders of his garment;—in fact, anything and everything that is commanded ceremonially he most punctiliously attends to; but, all the while, he is devouring widows' houses, he is living in the practice of secret sin, and he thinks that by ceremonies he shall be able to propitiate God, and be accepted. Sinner, pharisaic sinner, hear the death-knell of thy hopes tolled out by this verse: "Without holiness,"—and that is a thing thou knowest. nothing of,—"no man shall see the Lord." Thy ceremonies are vain and frivolous; even if God ordained them, seeing thou puttest thy trust in them, they shall utterly deceive and fail thee, for they do not constitute even a part of holiness. Thou canst not see God till thy heart be changed, till thy nature be renewed, till thine actions, in the tenor of them, shall become such as God would have them to be. Mere ceremonialists think they can get on without holiness. Fell delusion! Do I speak to any Ritualist who finds himself awkwardly situated here? Do I speak to any Romanist who has entered into a place where, not the works of the law, but the righteousness of Christ is preached? Let me remind you again, very solemnly, my hearer, that those fine hopes of yours, built upon the manoeuvres of the priests, and upon your own performances, shall utterly fail you in that day when most you shall need them. Your soul shall then stand in shivering nakedness when most you need to be well equipped before the eyes of God. These men know not true holiness.

Then there is *the moralist*. He has never done anything wrong in his life. He is not very observant of ceremonies, it is true; perhaps he even despises them; but he treats his neighbour with integrity, he believes that, so far as he knows, if his ledger be examined, it bears no evidence of a single dishonest deed. As touching the law, he is blameless: no one ever doubted the purity of his manner; from his youth up, his carriage has been amiable, his temperament what every one could desire,

and the whole tenor of his life is such that we may hold him up as an example of moral propriety. Ah, but this is not holiness before God. Holiness excludes immorality, but morality does not amount to holiness; for morality may be but the cleaning of the outside of the cup and the platter, while the heart may be full of wickedness. Holiness deals with the thoughts and intents, the purposes, the aims, the objects, the motives of men. Morality does but skim the surface, holiness goes into the very caverns of the great deep; holiness requires that the heart shall be set on God, and that it shall beat with love to him. The moral man may be complete in his morality without that. Methinks I might draw such a parallel as this. Morality is a sweet, fair corpse, well washed and robed, and even embalmed with spices; but holiness is the living man, as fair and as lovely as the other, but having life. Morality lies there, of the earth, earthy, soon to be food for corruption and worms; holiness waits and pants with heavenly aspirations, prepared to mount and dwell in immortality beyond the stars. These twain are of opposite nature: the one belongs to this world, the other belongs to that world beyond the skies. It is not said in heaven, "Moral, moral, moral art thou, O God!" but "Holy, holy, holy art thou. O Lord!" You note the difference between the two words at once. The one, how icy cold; the other, oh, how animated! Such is mere morality, and such is holiness! Moralist!—I know I speak to many such,—remember that your best morality will not save you; you must have more than this, for without holiness, —and that not of yourself, it must be given you of the Spirit of God, —without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.

Another individual, who thinks to get on without holiness, and who does win a fair reputation in certain circles, is *the experimentalist*. You must be aware that there are some professed followers of Christ whose whole religious life is inward; to tell you the truth, there is no life at all; but their own profession is that it is all inward. I have had the misery to be acquainted with one or two such. They are voluble talkers, discoursing with much satisfaction of themselves, but bitter critics of all who differ from them in the slightest degree; having an ordained standard as to the proper length to which Christian experience should go, cutting off everybody's head who was taller than they were, and stretching every man out by the neck who happened to be a little too short. I have known some of these persons. If a minister should say "duty" in the sermon, they would look as if they would never hear him again. He must be a dead legalist,—a "letter man", I think they call him. Or, if they are exhorted to holiness, why, they tell you they are perfect in Christ Jesus, and therefore there is no reason why they should have any thought of perfection in the work of the Spirit within. Groaning, grunting, quarrelling, denouncing, —not following peace with all men, but stirring up strife against all, —this is the practice of their religion. This is the summit to which they climb, and from which they look down with undisguised contempt upon all those worms beneath who are striving to serve God, and to do good in their day and generation. Now I pray you to remember that, against such men as these, there are many passages of Scripture most distinctly levelled; I think this is one among many others. Sirs, you may say what you will about what you dream you have felt, you may write what you please about what you fancy you have experienced; but if your own outward life be unjust, unholy, ungenerous, and unloving, you shall find no credit among us as to your being in Christ: "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." The moment you know a man who is drunk on a Saturday night, and then enjoys So-and-so's preaching on a Sunday; the moment you know a man who can tell you what a child of God should be, and then appears himself exactly what he should not be, just quit his company, and let him go to his own place, and where that is, Judas can tell you. Oh, beware of such high-fliers, with their waxen wings, mounting up to the very sun,—how great shall be their fall, when he that searches all hearts shall open the book,

and say, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink. Inasmuch as ye did it not. to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me."

There is another class of persons, happily fewer than they once were, but there are some among us still,—opinionists, who think they can do without holiness. These, too, it has sometimes been my misfortune to know. They have learned a sound creed, or perhaps an unsound one, for there are as many Arminians as Calvinists in this line,—they think they have got hold of *the* truth, that they are the men, and that, when they die, the faithful will fail from among men. They understand theology very accurately. They are wiser than their teachers. They can—

"A hair divide

Betwixt the west and north-west side."

There is no question about their being masters in divinity. If degrees went according to merit, they would have been dubbed "D. D." years ago, for they know everything, and are not a little proud that they do. And yet these men live a life that is a stench even in the nostrils of men who make no profession of religion. We have some of this kind in all congregations. I wish you would not come here. If we could do you good, we might be glad to see you; but you do so much hurt to the rest, and bring so much discredit upon the cause at large, that your room would be better than your company. You listen to the sermon, and sometimes perhaps have the condescension to speak well of the preacher, who wishes you would not. Yet, after the sermon is done, on the road home, there may be a public-house door just opened at one o'clock, and the brother refreshes himself, and perhaps does so many times. Even if it be the holy day, it is all the same, and yet he is a dear and precious child of God. No doubt he is in his own estimation. And then, during the week, he lives as others live, and acts as others act, and yet. congratulates himself that he knows the truth, and understands the doctrines of the gospel, and therefore he will surely be saved! Out with thee, man! Out with thee! Down with thy hopes! "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

"No big words of ready talkers,

No mere doctrines will suffice;

Broken hearts, and humble walkers—

These are dear in Jesus' eyes."

Heart-work, carried out afterwards into life-work,—this is what the Lord wants. You may perish as well with true doctrines as with false, if you pervert the true doctrine into licentiousness. You may go to hell by the cross as surely as you may by the theatre, or by the vilest of sin. You may perish with the name of Jesus on your lips, and with a sound creed sealed on your very bosom, for "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Now, if any of you belong to either of these four classes, I think you cannot help knowing it, and, being destitute of gospel holiness, you have good cause to bewail your character, and tremble for your destiny.

But, to help you still further, brethren, that man is destitute of true holiness *who can look back upon his own past sin without sorrow*. Oh, to think of our past lives! There were some of us who knew the Lord at fifteen years of age, but those fifteen years of unregeneracy,—we can never forget them! Others may say, "We did not know him till we were fifty or sixty." Ah, my dear brethren! you have much to weep over, but so have those of us who knew the Lord in early life. I can look back upon God's mercy with delight, but I hope I shall never be able to look back upon my sins with complacency. Whenever a man looks to any of his past faults and shortcomings, it ought to be through his tears. Some men recall their past lives, and talk of their old sins, and seem to roll

them under their tongues as a sweet morsel. They live their sins over again. As it was said of Alexander,—

"He fought his battles o'er again,  
And twice he slew the slain."

There are those who revel in the memory of their iniquities. They live their life in imagination over again. They recollect some deed of lewdness, or some act of infamy; and, as they think it over, they dare not repeat it, for their profession would be spoiled; but they love the thought, and cultivate it with a vicious zest. Thou art no friend to true holiness, but an utter stranger to it unless the past causes thee profound sorrow, and sends thee to thy knees to weep and hope that God, for Christ's sake, has blotted it out.

And I am quite sure that you know nothing of true holiness *if you can look forward to any future indulgence of sensual appetites with a certain degree of delightful anticipation*. Have I a man here, a professed Christian, who has formed some design in his mind to indulge the flesh, and to enjoy forbidden dainties when an opportunity occurs? Ah, sir! if thou canst think of those things that may come in thy way without tremor, I suspect thee: I would thou wouldst suspect thyself. Since the day that some of us knew Christ, we have always woken up in the morning with a fear lest we should that day disown our Master. And there is one fear which sometimes haunts me, and I must confess it; and were it not for faith in God, it would be too much for me. I cannot read the life of David without some painful emotions. All the time he was a young man, his life was pure before God, and in the light of the living it shone with a glorious lustre; but when grey hairs began to be scattered on his head, the man after God's heart sinned. I have sometimes felt inclined to pray that my life may come to a speedy end, lest haply in some evil hour, some temptation should come upon me, and I should fall. And do you not feel the same? Can you look forward to the future without any fear? Does not the thought ever cross your mind,— "He that thinketh he standeth may yet fall" "I And the very possibility of such a thing,—does it not drive you to God's mercy-seat, and do you not cry, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe"? There is no doxology in Scripture which I enjoy more than that one at the end of the Epistle of Jude: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to him be glory." I say to you are a stranger to holiness of heart if you can look forward to a future fall without great alarm.

Again, methinks you have great cause for questioning, *unless your holiness is uniform*; I mean, if your life is angelic abroad and devilish at home. You must suspect that it is at home that you are what you really are. I question whether any man is much better than he is thought to be by his wife and family, for they, after all, see the most of us, and know the truth about us; and if, sir, though you seem in the pulpit, or on the platform, or in the shop, to be amiable, Christian, and God-like to the passer-by, your children should have to mark your unkindness, your want of fatherly affection for their souls, and your wife has to complain of your domineering, of the absence of everything that is Christ-like, you may shrewdly suspect that there is something wrong in the state of your heart. O sirs, true holiness is a thing that will keep by night and by day, at home and abroad, on the land and on the sea! That man is not right with God who would not do the same in the dark that he would do in the light; who does not feel, "If every eye should look upon me, I would not be different from what I am when no eye gazes upon me; that which keeps me right is not the judgement and opinions of men, but the eye of the Omnipresent, and the heart of the Lord who loves me." Is your obedience uniform? Some farmers I know, in the country, maintain a creditable profession in the

village where they live; they go to a place of worship, and seem to be very good people: but there is a farmer's dinner once a year, it is only once a year, and we will not say anything about how they get home,—the less that is said, the better for their reputation. "It is only once a year," they tell us; but holiness does not allow of dissipation even "once a year." And we know some who, when they go on the Continent, for instance, say, "Well, we need not be quite so exact there;" and therefore the Sabbath is utterly disregarded, and the sanctities of daily life are neglected, so reckless are they in their recreations. Well, sirs, if your religion is not warranted to keep in any climate, it is good for nothing. I like the remark which I heard from one of the sailors on board ship in crossing the Irish Channel. A passenger said, to try him, "Wouldn't you like to attend a certain place of amusement?" which he mentioned. "Well, sir," said the sailor, "I go there as often as ever I like; I have a religion that lets me go as often as I think proper." "Oh, how is that?" he enquired. "Because I never like to go at all," was the reply; "I do not keep away because of any law, for it is no trial to me; but I should be unhappy to go there." Surely the fish, were it asked if it did not wish to fly, would reply, "I am not unhappy because I am not allowed to fly; it is not my element." So the Christian can say, "I am not unhappy because I do not spend my nights in worldly society, because I do not join in their revelry and wantonness; it is not my element, and I could not enjoy it. Should you drag me into it, it would be a martyrdom which to my spirit would be alike repulsive and painful." You are a stranger to holiness if your heart does not feel that it revolts at the thought of sin.

Then, let me further remark, that *those who can look with delight or any degree of pleasure upon the sins of others are not holy*. We know of some, who will not themselves perpetrate an unseemly jest, yet, if another does so, and there is a laugh excited upon some not over-decent remark, they laugh, and thus give sanction to the impropriety. If there is a low song sung in their hearing, which others applaud, though they cannot quite go the length of joining in the plaudits, still they secretly enjoy it; they betray a sort of gratification that they cannot disguise; they confess to a gusto that admires the wit while it cannot endorse the sentiment. They are glad the minister was not there; they are glad to think the deacon did not happen to see them just at that moment; yet still, if there could be a law established to make the thing pretty respectable, they would not mind. Some of you know people who fall into this snare. There are professing Christians who go where you at one time could not go; but, seeing that they do it, you go too, and there you see others engaged in sin, and it becomes respectable because you give it countenance. There are many things, in this world, that would be execrated if it were not that Christian men go to them, and the ungodly men say, "Well, if it is not righteous, there is not much harm in it, after all; it is innocent enough if we keep within bounds." Mind! mind! mind, professor, if thine heart begins to suck in the sweets of another man's sin, it is unsound in the sight of God; if thou canst even wink at another man's lust, depend upon it that thou wilt soon shut thine eye on thine own, for we are always more severe with other men than we are with ourselves. There must be an absence of the vital principle of godliness when we can become partakers of other men's sins by applauding or joining with them in the approval of them. Let us examine ourselves scrupulously, then, whether we be among those who have no evidences of that holiness without which no man can see God. But, beloved, we hope better things of you, and things which accompany salvation. If you and I, as in the sight of God, feel that we would be holy if we could, that there is not a sin we wish to spare, that we would be like Jesus, —O that we could !—that we would sooner suffer affliction than ever run into sin, and displease

our God; if our heart be really right in God's statutes, then, despite all the imperfections we bemoan, we have holiness, wherein we may rejoice, and we pray to our gracious God,—

"Finish, then, thy new creation,  
Pure and spotless let us be."

II. Now, then, for the second point very briefly indeed: "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord;" that is to say, no man can have communion with God in this life, and no man can have enjoyment with God in the life to come, without holiness. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" If thou goest with Belial, dost thou think that Christ will go with thee? Will Christ be a pot companion for thee? Dost thou expect to take the Lord of love and mercy with thee to the haunts of sin? Professor, dost thou think the just and holy One will stand at thy counter to be co-trader with thee in thy tricks? What thinkest thou, O man! wouldst thou make Christ a sharer of thy guilt? and yet he would be so if he had fellowship with thee in it. Nay, if thou wilt go on in acts of unrighteousness and unholiness, Christ parts company with thee, or, rather, thou never didst have any fellowship with him. Thou hast gone out from us because thou wert not of us; for, if thou hadst been of us, doubtless thou wouldst have continued with us. And as to heaven, dost thou think to go there with thine unholiness? God smote an angel down from heaven for sin, and will he let man in with sin in his right hand? God would sooner extinguish heaven than see sin despoil it. It is enough for him to bear with thine hypocrisies on earth; shall he have them flung in his own face in heaven? What, shall an unholy life utter its licentiousness in the golden streets? Shall there be sin in that higher and better paradise? No, no; God has sworn by his holiness—and he will not, he cannot lie,—that those who are not holy, whom his Spirit has not renewed, who have not been, by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, made to love that which is good, and hate that which is evil, shall never stand in the congregation of the righteous. Sinner, it is a settled matter with God that no man shall see him without holiness.

III. I come to my last point, which is, pleading with you. Doubtless, there are some in this vast crowd who have, some sort of longings after salvation and after heaven. My eye looks round; yes, sometimes it has been my wont to gaze with sorrow upon some few here whose cases I know. Do I not remember one? He has been very often impressed, and so impressed, too, that he has not been able to sleep. Night after night he has prayed, he has wrestled with God, and there is only one thing in his way, and that is drink, strong drink! By the time that Wednesday or Thursday comes round, he begins to forget what he heard on Sunday. Sometimes, he has taken the pledge, and kept it three months; but the craving has been too strong for him, and then he has given all resolutions and vows up, and has plunged into his besetting sin worse than before. Others I know in whom it is another sin. You are here now, are you? You do not come of a morning, and yet, when you come at night, you feel it very severely; but why not come here in the morning? Because your shop is open, and that shop seems to stand between you and any hope of salvation. There are others who say, "Well, now, if I go to hear that man, I must give up the vice that disquiets my conscience; but I cannot yet, I cannot yet." And you are willing to be damned for the sake of some paltry joy? Well, if you will be damned, it shall not be for want of reasoning with you, and weeping over you. Let me put it to you,—do you say that you cannot give up the sin because of the profit? Profit! Profit, forsooth! "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" "What profit have you obtained hitherto? You have put it all into a bag full of holes; what you have earned one way, you have spent in another; and you know that, if this life were all, you surely have not been any the better for it. Besides, what is profit when compared with your immortal soul? Oh, I adjure

you, lose not gold for dross, lose not substance for shadows! Lose not your immortal soul for the sake of some temporary gain!

But it is not profit with some of you, it is pleasure, it is a morbid passion. You feel, perhaps, for some particular sin which happens to beset you, such an intense longing, and in looking back upon it afterwards, you think you could give up everything but that. Young man, is it some secret sin which we must not mention, or is it some private guilt which is hidden from all hearts but thine own? O soul, what is this pleasure, after all? Weigh it, weigh it; what does it come to? Is it equal to the pain it costs thee now, to the pangs of conscience, to the agonies of remorse? When an American doctor, who had led a loose life, came to die, he seemed to wake up from a sort of stupor, and he said, "Find that word, find that word." "What word?" they asked. "Why," he said, "that awful word,—remorse!" He said it again,—"Remorse!" and then, gathering up his full strength, he fairly seemed to shriek it out,—"Remorse!" "Write it," said he, "write it." It was written. "Write it with larger letters, and let me gaze at it; underline it. And now," said he, "none of you know the meaning of that word, and may you never know it; it has an awful meaning in it, and I feel it *now*,—*Remorse! Remorse!! Remorse!!!*"

What, I ask, is the pleasure of sin contrasted with the results it brings in this life? and what, I ask, is this pleasure' compared with the joys of godliness? Little as you may think I know of the joys of the world, yet so far as I can form a judgment, I can say that I would not take all the joys that earth can ever afford in a hundred years for one half-hour of what my soul has known in fellowship with Christ. We, who believe in him, do have our sorrows; but, blessed be God, we do have our joys, and they are such joys—oh, such joys, with such substance in them, and such reality and certainty, that we could not and would not exchange them for anything except heaven in its fruition.

And then, bethink thee, sinner, what are all these pleasures when compared with the loss of thy soul? There is a gentleman, high in position in this world, with fair lands and a large estate, who, when he took me by the button-hole after a sermon,—and he never hears me preach without weeping,—said to me, "O sir, it does seem such an awful thing that I should be such a fool!" "And what for?" I asked. "Why," he said, "for the sake of that court, and of those gaieties of life, and of mere honour, and dress, and fashion, I am squandering away my soul. I know," he said, "I know the truth, but I do not follow it. I have been stirred in my heart to do what is right, but I go on just as I have done before; I fear I shall sink back into the same state as before. Oh, what a fool am," said he, "to choose pleasures that only last a little while, and then to be lost for ever and for ever!" I pleaded hard with him, but I pleaded in vain; there was such intoxication in the gaiety of life that he could not leave it. Alas! alas! if we had to deal with sane men, our preaching would be easy; but sin is a madness, such a madness that, when men are bitten by it, they would not be persuaded even though one should rise from the dead. "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

"But," I hear someone say, "it is impossible; I have tried it, and I have broken down; I did try to get better, but I did not succeed; it is of no use, it cannot be done." You are right, my dear friend, and you are wrong. You are right, it is of no use going about it as you did; if you went in your own strength, holiness is a thing you cannot get, it is beyond you. The depth says, "It is not in me;" and the height saith, "It is not in me." You can no more make yourself holy than you could create a world. But you are wrong to despair, for Christ can do it; he can do it for you, and he can do it now. Believe on him, and that believing will be the proof that he is working in you. Trust him, and he that has suffered for thy sins, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, shall come in, and put to rout the lion

of the pit. He will bruise Satan under thy feet shortly. There is no corruption too strong for him to overcome, there is no habit too firm for him to break. He can turn a lion to a lamb, and a raven to a dove. Trust him to save thee, and he will do it, whosoever thou mayest be, and whatsoever thy past life may have been. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;"—that is, he shall be saved from his sins, and delivered from his evil practices; he shall be made a new man in Christ Jesus by the power of the Spirit, received through the medium of his faith. Believe, poor soul, that Christ is able to save thee, and he will do it. He will be as good as thy faith, and as good as his own word. May he now add his own blessing to the word I have spoken, and to the people who have heard it, for his own sake! Amen.

## The Saint's Heritage and Watchword

A Sermon

(No. 2908)

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Delivered by

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At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

*On Lord's-day Morning, November 5th, 1854.*

NOTE: This is taken from an early published edition of the original sermon. The version that appears in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 50, was slightly edited by the publishers. For edition we have restored in most places the text of the earlier published edition, while retaining a few of the editorial refinements of the *Met Tab* edition.

"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."—Isaiah 54:17.

THIS IS THE FIFTH of November, a day very notable in English history. The events which transpired on it ought never to be forgotten. On this memorable day, the Catholics, foiled in all their schemes for crushing our glorious Protestantism, devised a plot horrible and diabolical enough to render them for ever hateful among upright men. The vast Armada of Spain on which they had relied, had been by the breath of God scattered and given to destruction, and now the cowardly traitors attempted by the foulest means the end which they could not accomplish by open warfare. Under the Houses of Parliament the deadly powder was concealed which they hoped would be a death-blow to both Houses, and so annihilate the power of Protestantism; but God looked from heaven, he confounded their knavish tricks, he laid their secrets bare, and discovered their treachery. Hallelujah to the King immortal, invisible, who guarded us, and guards us still from the devices of Rome and hell. Praise to his name, we are free from the Pope of Rome, to whom—

"Britons never will be slaves."

"While for our princes they prepare,  
In caverns deep a burning snare,  
He shot from heaven a piercing ray,  
And the dark treachery brought to day."

Nor is this the only event for which the fifth of November is notable, for in 1688, we as a nation experienced a deliverance equally as great. James II had attempted to revive the dying cause of Popery, and the hopes of Satan were great. But sturdy Protestants would not easily lose their dear-bought liberties, and, therefore, brought about the glorious revolution by which King William III ascended the throne, and from him the succession has been happily continued until the reign of our Queen, for whom our earnest prayers shall rise.

"Such great deliverance God hath wrought,  
And down to us salvation brought,  
And still the care of guardian heaven,  
Secures the bliss itself has given."

Blessed be God that on this fifth of November we can record such deliverances! Our Puritan forefathers never suffered this day to pass over without a commemoration service. So far from this day being forgotten, it ought to be remembered, not by the saturnalia of striplings, but by the songs of saints. I think I have in my possession now a record of sermons preached on the fifth of November by Matthew Henry. Many divines of his time regularly preached on this day. I think the true Protestant feeling of this country, which has lately so revived, and which has shown itself so strongly, will scarcely forgive me, if I do not this morning return most humble and hearty thanks to that God who has delivered us from the curse, and enabled us to stand as Protestant men free to preach the gospel of Christ.

I notice in my text two things this morning—the first is, *the saint's heritage*; the second, *the saint's watchword*.

I. First, the saint's *heritage*—"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord;" and then comes *the saint's watchword*—"Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

Now, do not suppose that this morning I shall either have time, or opportunity, or talents, or power, to enter into an investigation of all the saint's heritages, especially when you remember that "all things are ours"—the gift of God, the purchase of the Saviour's blood; so that time would fail us to talk of the possessions of the child of God. This world is his; earth is his lodge, and heaven his home. This life is his, with all its sorrows and its joys; death is his, with all its terrors and solemn realities; and eternity is his, with all its immortality and its grandeur. God is his, with all his attributes. The saint has a prospective right to every thing. God hath made him the heir of all things; for we are co-heirs with Christ, and joint-heirs with the Son of God. O, we have not time enough in the term of seventy years to read over once the fair inventory of the saint's possessions. If we could read it over once, there would be such a depth unfathomable, such a height immeasurable, such an intensity of value, such a depth of preciousness, that we should need to read it over an eternal number of times before we should ever be able to comprehend the love of God. So, then, you see I am not about to enter into the heritage of God's people at large; but I am going to speak of one peculiar item of that bright heritage as mentioned in my text; and that is *preservation*. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise up against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." I shall speak of this as being the heritage, not only of the church at large, but the personal and particular possession of every true believer, and every elect child of God.

First, then, there is the promise that we shall have protection against the *hand* of men: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." Satan has always used the hand of man against the church of Christ. The weapon of physical force has ever been brought to bear against the church of God. From the day when first Cain with his club struck his brother Abel and laid him low, down to the time Zacharias the son of Barachias—from that time until now, the weapon has been constantly used against the church of God. There has never been a time when a weapon has not been forged against the church of Christ. Yea, even at the present moment, as I stand here, and with the eye of fancy survey our world, I see a fire blazing—fierce is the flame and high its pile of fuel. I see a monarch forging a weapon; a crowned tyrant longs to bring forth chains of iron for the liberties of Europe, and smaller despots long to destroy the germ of all true liberty, the glorious gospel of the blessed God. I see the armies ready against the Lord of hosts, ready to do battle against the servants of God. Still here is the sweet comfort; they may forge the weapon; they may fashion the sword;

they may shut the prison door; they may confine the prisoners, they may make their instruments of torture; but they can not prosper; for God hath said it: He "breaketh the bow; and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire." "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." He will not let it do so.

Let us just look back through history, and see how God has fulfilled this gracious promise to his church in past days. He has one it sometimes in this way. He has not allowed the sword so much as to touch his church. At other times he has suffered the sword to do its work; and yet out of evil he hath brought forth good. Sometimes no weapon that has been formed against the church has prospered, because God has not suffered it so much as to touch the church. Look at many cases of history. There is the overthrow of Pharaoh. Look yonder, there he is at the head of all the chivalry of Egypt pursuing the chosen race. The sea divides to give refuge to the Lord's elect. Lo, they tread the pebbly bottom of the sea of Edom, while the waters stand like walls of snow-white crystal on the right and on the left. But the impious monarch, all unawed by this mighty marvel, shouts, "On, on, soldiers of Memphis! do ye fear to tread where slaves are bold?" See, they boldly dash between the watery heights; chariot and horse are in the sea, madly pursuing Israel. Ho, Israel! fear not the uplifted spear, dread not the rattling chariot; they are marching to their tombs, their weapons shall not prosper. Moses uplifts the rod of God, the parted floods embrace with eager joy, and grasp the helpless foe within their arms.

"Over horse and over car,  
Over every man of war,  
Over Pharaoh's crown of gold  
The loud thundering billows rolled.  
Mid the water dark and dread,  
Down they sank, they sank like lead!"

Again, my brethren, behold another glorious proof of the promise. Haman had conceived a hatred to Mordecai, and for his sake the whole race of Jews must perish. How deep he lays his plots, how readily he obtains the consent of the king, how sure is he of revenge. Even now in imagination he sees Mordecai swinging on the lofty gallows, and all his kindred given to slaughter. Ah, thou enemy, delight in thine imagination, for it shall be disappointed; rejoice in thy design, but it shall be utterly confounded. There is a God in the courts of heaven, and an Esther in the palace of Shushan. Thou thyself shalt be hanged on thine own gallows, and the race of David shall revenge the deed of the Agagite upon his sons. O, Israel, well mayest thou rejoice at the feast of Purim, for the weapon of the mighty is broken. Nor here alone can we see the promise fulfilled; for time would fail me to tell of conquered Amalek and routed Midian. Scarce can we speak of Philistia and her giants given to the beasts of prey, or Edom slaughtered by the sword. Let the armies witness who fled at the fancied rumbling of chariots, or that host who in one night became the inhabitants of the realms of death. Let the warriors who rest with their rusted swords beneath their earthy pillows rise from their long sleep and confess the futility of their efforts; yea, let monarchs now in the chains of hell bear witness to their own utter confusion when the Lord appeared in battle for his chosen. March on, despot; bid thy slaves rise against the free, crush the helpless, and usurp the dominions of thy neighbor; but know that the Lord is mightier than thou. Thy northern hordes are not invincible; and Britons, with the help of God, shall teach thee that in vain thou liftest the hand of robbery. Thou contendest with a nation in whose midst the elect of God are praying against thee, and thou shalt know that God has said unto her holy seed, "No weapon formed against thee shall prosper."

But now another view of the subject presents itself. Sometimes God has suffered the enemy to exact upon us, and the sword has been used with terrible effect. O, there have been dark and gloomy days for the chosen church of Christ! When persecution has cried, "Havoc, and let slip the dogs of war," blood has flowed like water over the land! our enemies have triumphed. the martyr was bound to the stake, or was crucified upon the tree; the pastor was cut off, and the flocks were scattered. Cruel torture—awful suffering was endured by the saints of God. The elect cried, and said, "O Lord, how long? let it repent thee concerning thy servants." The enemy laughed, and said, "Ah, ah! so would we have it." Zion was under a cloud. Her precious saints, comparable to fine gold, were esteemed as earthen vessels, the work of the hands of the potter, and her princes were trodden down like mire in the streets. O, my soul! how was it in that sad day, when the enemy came in upon her like a flood, and she could scarcely lift up the standard of the Lord against him? O God, there was an hour when thou wouldst not hear the cry of thine elect! It seemed as if thine ear was deaf; the plaint of the widow was unheeded; the groans, the agonies, and the cries of martyrs were unnoticed; and thou didst still allow the enemy to vex thy children. Persecution shook the land, and sent forth its burning lava of cruelty, devastating the fair fields of the church of God. But did the enemy prosper? Did he succeed? Did persecution destroy his church? Did the weapon formed against us prosper? No! Each time that the church had a wave pass over her she rose out of it, and lifted her fair countenance, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners. She was all the more glorious for it all. Every time her blood was shed each drop became a man, and each man thus converted stood prepared to pour out the vital current from his veins to defend the cause. Ah! those were times when, instead of the church being diminished and brought low, God did multiply her, and persecution worked for her good instead of causing her evil. The persecutor did not destroy the church. Christ's church never sails so well as when she is rocked from side to side by the winds of persecution; when the spray of her blood dashes in the front, and when at every lurch she is well-nigh overwhelmed. Nothing has helped God's church so much as persecution; it has increased, and been strengthened by it.

You will remember that this is not only the heritage of the church at large, but of every individual believer. And now I can speak to some poor souls who are in this place of worship. O brother! O sister! there is a word for thee this morning. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." There are some dear sisters who come into this house of prayer under fear of brutal husbands—others, sons and daughters who have cruel fathers. I know there are some here who meet with dire and terrible persecution because they come to the house of God. O, little do some of us know when we meet here what our next neighbor on the seat has had to suffer to come up to this house! "I could a tale unfold would ruffle up your spirits"—a tale of persecution endured by some of the saints of God in this place. This is a word for you: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." The blow of a brutal husband shall not injure you; it may injure your body, but it can not injure your soul. "Fear not them that kill the body, and afterward have no more that they can do, but fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell." Why should you fear? God is on your side. Remember, Christ has said, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad when they say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name's sake; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Rejoice, and leap for joy, for great shall be your reward in heaven." Hold on, young man; hold on, young woman; still continue in the fear of God, and you shall find that persecution shall work for your good. But mark thee, persecutor, if thou art here this morning, there is a chain in hell of hot iron that shall be bound around thy waist; there are fiends that have whips of fire, and they shall

scourge thy soul throughout eternity, because thou darest to put a stumbling-block in the way of God's children. Remember what Scripture saith: "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the sea."

The second portion of the heritage is, "Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." Here is a protection from the tongue of men. Satan leaves no stone unturned against the church of God. He uses not simply the hand, but, what is oftener a harder weapon, the tongue. We can bear a blow sometimes, but we can not endure an insult. There is a great power in the tongue. We can rise from a blow which laid us low on the ground; but we can not so easily recover from slander; that lays the character low. "Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn."

Look at the church at large and see how she has condemned her adversaries. When first she came into the world, she had to oppose Judaism; but she has condemned it, and its doctrines are now effete: then up started philosophers, and said it was foolishness, because they found nothing of worldly wisdom in it. But what has become of the philosopher now? Where is the stoic who boasted of his wisdom? where the Epicurean who lectured in the streets of Greece? Where are they now? They are gone, and their names are only used as words that were—as things that have ceased to be—as figures of antiquity. Then Satan invented Mohammedanism in order to oppose the truth; but where is that? We have condemned it long ago. It is now a bloated carcass, almost without life, not able to stand. The cross has made the crescent wane.

Where are the various systems of infidelity which have arisen one after another? They are gone quite out of sight. Now and then we felt rather alarmed; because we heard that some great people were going to prove that the Bible was not true, and our creed was not sound. I remember talking with an old man once: "Ah," said he, "sir, this geology will quite ruin man's belief in the Bible." But where is geology now? Instead of opposing the gospel, it furnishes many powerful confirmations of the facts of revelation. Each one of the sciences has, in its imperfect condition, been used as a battering-ram against the truth of God; but as soon as it has been understood it has been made a pillar in Zion's outworks. Fear not, O son of God, that the perversions of men of science can damage our cause. Lying tongues we shall condemn. O infidelity! abortion of the night! thou hast been condemned a thousand times. Thou art a Protean creature, changing thy shape as ages change. Once thou wast a laughing idiotic plaything for Voltaire; then a bullying blasphemer with Tom Paine; then a cruel, blood-drinking fiend, fit mate for Robespierre; anon, a speculating theorist with Owen; and now a worldly, gross, secularizing thing for impious lecturers and profane admirers. I fear thee not, infidelity; thou art an asp, biting at iron, spending thy spleen, and breaking thy fangs.

My friends, did you ever walk the centuries, and mark the rise and fall of various empires of unbelief? If so, you will seem to be on a battle-field, and you see corpses; you ask the name of the dead, and some one replies, that is the corpse of such a system, and that the carcass of such a theory; and, mark you, as surely as time rolls on, the now rampant style of infidelity will perish, and, in fifty years, we shall see the skeleton of an exploded scheme, and of its admirers the epitaph will be, "Here lies a fool, called of old, a secularist." Now, what shall we say of Mormonism, the haggard superstition of the West; or of Puseyism, the express image of Popery; or of Socinian and Arian heresies, of Arminian perversions, or of Antinomian abuse? What shall we say of each, but that their death-knell shall soon toll, and these children of hell shall sink back to their birth-place in the pit. And yon old and crazy church upon the seven hills has dared to hurl its anathemas at the saints

of the Lord. Still doth she hold the wine-cup of abomination; still is she robed in scarlet, and her sway is over many waters; but she shall be condemned in judgment. Lo, the millstone in the hand of the archangel hastens to its fall, and Babylon the Great shall perish with a terrible overthrow. Then shall this cry go up from the Church of God, "Shout, O heavens, for the Lord hath done it; sing, O ye inhabitants of the earth, for the promise is accomplished, and every opposing tongue is condemned!"

Now, I wish to make this a personal heritage of each child of God—"every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment, you shall condemn." O! what a sweet thought that is for me, for there are many tongues busy about me. Some say, "He is a good man;" others say, "He is deceiving the people." Well, if God will convert more sinners, and bring more to his church, they may decide which way they like. I am not careful to answer any of the self-thought infallible in this matter. You never knew of a preacher who gathers a crowd, or who is doing any good, but he is sure to be slandered, and vilified, and so on; but here is a promise—"Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn." We can afford a little slander, because we know we shall have all the more to condemn. The more accusers, the more acquittals; the more slander, so much the more honor of God: so the enemy may just slander still for what we care; for "every tongue that shall rise against us in judgment we shall condemn."

But I know that there are some of my hearers who believe and love the doctrines of grace; and sometimes you are called to dispute and contend for them. I know you are; I trust you are; I hope you love to "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." I know what is the case with many of you: when you come to plead with an infidel you do not know what to say. Has it not been so with you many a time? You have said, "I almost wish I could hold my tongue, for the man has confounded me;" yet remember, "Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn." Last time you had that dispute, you thought your adversary conquered, did you not? You thought wrong. He might glory in his intellectual prowess. He might say, "Oh, that man is nothing to me." But leave him alone till he gets to bed; and when the hours of darkness are around him, he will seriously begin to think. He conquered you in appearance; but now you master him. Wait till he is sick, and then your words shall ring in his ears; they shall come up again from the grave if he should survive you, and you will conquer him then. Do not be afraid to argue for the truth. Do not think that infidels are wise men; or Arminians are so exceedingly learned. Stand up for the truth; and there is so much solid learning and real truth to be found in the doctrines that we uphold, that none of you need be ashamed of them. They are mighty and must prevail. The mighty God of Jacob, by the demonstration of the Holy Ghost, makes them triumphant!

There is one that has risen against me in judgment many times, and I dare say he has troubled many of the dear people of the Lord here—that is Satan. He is always rising in judgment against us. Whenever we get into a little trouble, he comes and says, "You are no saint." If we commit a sin—"You should not sin like that, if you had been a child of God; you have no interest in the covenant; you are an enthusiast, you have deceived yourself." How many times Satan has risen against me in judgment—so risen that I have been fool enough to heed what he said. I have told him sometimes, "You are a liar, and the father of lies;" but at other times I have believed his malicious accusation. O, it is no easy thing to stand against the insinuations of the evil one. You, my brethren, are not strangers to his devices. He has set conscience at you, the hell-hounds of legal convictions howled upon you, and the drum of terrible doom thundered in you ears; then up stood the fiend himself and denied your union with Jesus, claiming you as his own prey and portion. Ah,

how glorious the moment when our Advocate entered the forum of conscience, and assured us that he had pleaded our cause in the court of King's Bench above. And, oh, when he showed us the adversary's brief, spoiled by the nails of the cross, we felt that the tongue of Satan was condemned, and his calumnies hushed. Glorious Councillor, all praise to thine adorable name.

Let the saints know also that they shall soon have a yet more public triumph over their cruel enemy. At the day of judgment, the foe of God and man shall be dragged from his cell, shall lift his brazen front with thunder scarred, receive his sentence, and begin a hell more terrible than all he has endured before. O saint, dost thou know that thou shalt judge him? Know you not that you shall judge angels? You, sons of God, shall sit as assessors with the firstborn Son, and when he shall pronounce the doom of the dragon, you shall solemnly say "Amen" to the sentence. Rejoice, O poor tried one; thou shalt tread upon the head of thine enemy, and thou shalt know that the promise is fulfilled in thine own experience—"Every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

But now, beloved, I have spoken sufficiently for the present on this glorious heritage of the saints of God. The weapons are not to prosper, and the tongues are to be condemned. II. Now we must close up with THE SAINT'S WATCHWORD. What is that? "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

In ancient times, if not at present, armies used to have their watchwords, by which they might recognize one another in the dark. We want a watchword now. It is very difficult to tell the children of God unless we have certain signs. God himself gives us the watchword. "Your righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." You can always tell a saint of God by this watchword. If he says, "My righteousness is of God," you may safely believe that he is a disciple of Jesus Christ. If he does not understand our shibboleth, he may not have lived in that country where they speak the pure language of Canaan, and that may excuse defects in his language. He may differ from us in some points, but if he sincerely says, "My righteousness is of God," you may safely conclude that he is not an enemy of truth. I mean "THE TRUTH as it is in Jesus."

We may understand this watchword in two senses. It may mean that *Christian justification in the eyes of the world is of God; and again, their righteousness and salvation is of God.* O, there is to be a time when God's children shall come out clear of all slander, when falsehood shall be swept away, and they shall stand forth justified even by their enemies. Their slanderers shall have nothing to say against them. They shall share in the admiration which an assembled universe shall be constrained to give to him who doeth all things well. But this vindication will not be brought about by their own efforts. They have not been anxious to avoid reproach for Christ's sake. They have not wept and bemoaned themselves because they were counted the offscouring of all things. No; their righteousness, their entire clearing from the aspersions of malice and the calumnies of envy will come from Jehovah. The escutcheon of the church is in the Lord's hands, and he will wipe away all her defilement. The character of the saints God himself shall vindicate, and all liars shall have their portion in the lake of fire and brimstone. Let this be the pennon on our lance; let this be our cheering watchword, our vindication—"Our righteousness is of the Lord." Now for the second meaning "Their justifying righteousness is of me," saith the Lord.

Now, if I wished to test you all, and might ask you only one question, I would ask this: What is your righteousness? Now come along in single file. What is your righteousness? O, I am as good as my neighbors. Go along with you; you are not my comrade. What is *your* righteousness? Well, I am rather better than my neighbors, for I go to chapel regularly. Off with you, sir; you do not

know the watchword. And you next; *what* is *your* righteousness? I have been baptized, and am a member of the church. Yes, and so you may; and if that is your hope, you are in the gall of bitterness. Now, you next; what is your hope? O, I do all I can, and Christ makes up the rest. Rubbish! You are a Babylonian, you are no Israelite: Christ is no make-weight—away with you. Here comes the last. What is your righteousness? My righteousness is filthy rags, except one righteousness which I have, which Christ wrought out for me on Calvary, imputed to me by God himself, which makes me pure and spotless as an angel. Ah, brother, you and I are fellow-soldiers: I have found you out; that is the watchword. "Your righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." I do not ask whether you are Churchmen, or whether you are Methodists, or Independents, or Baptists, if you do but know this watchword—"Your righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." I can forgive all those other minor things, if you can sing—

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness,  
My beauty are, my glorious dress."

Tell me you have got any other trust, and I will have nothing to do with you. Tell me you can work out your own salvation, and I will not acknowledge you for a brother. But if you tell me that from first to last you rely on Jesus, then I acknowledge you as a fellow-soldier; and I am glad to see you wherever I meet you.

But to wind up; we have had the heritage of the saints, and we have had the watchword of the saints. What next shall we say? We will say, how well God has kept his promise. Has he not? You must know that it is just 249 years ago—it will be 250 next year—the fifth jubilee—since under the Parliament-house the train was laid, and the gun powder ready, to blow up the House of Lords and Commons, and utterly to destroy the nation. Ah, this night 249 years ago, how Satan gloated on the thought that he should destroy the church, and exalt his darlings to honors in the place of those who loved the Lord. Where are their mighty men? O! they said, the foundations will be removed; and what will the righteous do? They thought that surely their end would be accomplished. But how sadly were they disappointed! They were discovered. Down went the soldiers, and found out the plot; and Popery had been prevented from spreading throughout Great Britain. O, blessed be the name of the Lord! "no weapon that is formed against the church shall prosper." We glory because we can put our finger upon history and exclaim, God is true, and events are witnesses of his faithfulness.

O beloved, has the Holy Ghost given you an inwrought knowledge of the truth of this word of God? Have you experienced blessed deliverances from the right hand of the Most High? Many of you, I fear, have neither part nor lot in this matter, and you have true cause to lament your terrible loss in being unable to grasp these covenant blessings. But some of us may now anticipate the hour when we shall obtain complete redemption with all the blood-bought family, and then, ah, then, how shall we with rapture review delivering grace in all its thousand instances! Hark! hark! methought I heard sweet music; methought I heard a song descending from the regions up above, borne down by gales whose breath is sweet as that which comes from the spicy groves of Araby. I hear a sound not earthly: it is, it must be celestial, for no mortal sonnets can with these compare. O river of harmony! Where are the lips from which thou flowest? The heavens are opened; I see a host in white robes, with crowns upon their heads, and palm-branches in their hands. Who are these? whence come they? These are they who have passed through much tribulation. We have whitened our robes in the blood of the Lamb; therefore we are without fault before the throne of God, and we serve him day and night in his temple. Holy ones, repeat the song; saints of God,

re-echo the chorus; repeat it yet again, that these ears may hear it. What do you sing? "No weapon that is formed against us hath prospered; every tongue that hath risen against us in judgment we have condemned." This is the heritage—"Our righteousness is of the Lord." Farewell, saints of God! Now, saints below, take up the train, and sing it by holy, faithful, confident anticipation—

"No weapon hath prospered, the foe is o'ercome;  
 No tongue hath succeeded, the wise ones are dumb;  
 The Lord is our glory, and each of the host  
 Shall yet shout hosannah on Canaan's fair coast."  
 Glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, world without end.  
 ISAIAH 43:14-28; AND 44:1-8.

Isaiah 43:14-16. *Thus saith the LORD, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator of Israel, your King. Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty water;*

Great events in history all have some connection with the Church of Christ. We may not always be able to see it, but we may rest assured that it is so. The rise and fall of empires have a great deal to do with the chosen people of God. So here he reminds them of what he did in the ancient days when he smote Egypt at the Red sea, and made a path for his people through the mighty waters.

17. *Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.*

There is a little blaze and a little smoke, and then all is over with the tow. So shall it be with those who set themselves up against the Lord; he shall confound their wisdom, and humble their pride.

18, 19. *Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the thing of old. Behold I will do a new thing;*

What God has done once, he can do again; but he can also make yet grander and more marvellous displays of his power and grace than he has ever yet given.

19, 20. *Now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honor me, the dragons and the owls: because I give water, in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.*

If then, O child of God, thou art in sore distress; if all around thee is comfortless as a waste, howling wilderness; yet do not despair: God can make a way for thee even there, and can supply thy needs. He open up a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the midst of the desert; joy and rejoicing may come to thee even in the depths of thy distress.

21. *This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.*

He will not be disappointed in his people. He made them that he might get glory out of them, and he will surely have it; none shall be able to prevent it.

22-24. *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honored me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast brought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.*

Remember that this is the wearied Lord who is speaking, the Lord whose patience seems to be well-nigh exhausted by the provocations of his people; yet how wonderful is his message to them!

25, 26. *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance. Let us together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.*

"If thou hast anything to say in thine own defense, out with it. Come to me, and let the cause of this quarrel be removed; let me hear thy plea if thou hast one."

27, 28. *Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

God justifies himself for his heavy strokes upon Israel, tells them that the reason lay in their own sin.

Isaiah 44:1-3. *Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant and Israel, whom I have chosen. Thus saith the LORD, that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. 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:*

"Think not that I am anxious to punish you for your sin. Only return to me, and I will be delighted to bless you. I will help you out of your troubles; I will supply your needs; and not only so, but I will bless your children generation after generation."

4, 5. *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.*

God still has power over human hearts; he can bring back to himself his wandering children.

6. *Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.*

He gathered up all into himself: as he is the first and the last, where is there space for any other god? He, therefore, would have all our hearts; he would have us love, and adore, and serve him, and him alone.

7. *And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order fore, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them.*

If these idols be gods, let them prophesy, and tell what is to happen in the future; but they cannot even speak to one another.

8. *Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses, is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.*

\* Singularly enough, the battle of Inkerman was at this moment raging, Nov. 5, 1854.

## Job's Sure Knowledge

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

At the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

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"For I know that my Redeemer liveth,"—Job 19:25.

I DARESAY you know that there are a great many difficulties about the translation of this passage. It is a very complicated piece of Hebrew, partly, I suppose, owing to its great antiquity, being found in what is, probably, one of the oldest Books of the Bible. Besides that, different persons have tried to translate it according to their own varying views. The Jews stiffly fight against the notion of the Messiah and his resurrection being found in this verse, while many Christian commentators see here everything that we can find in the New Testament, and translate the passage as though Job were as well instructed in this matter as we are now that Christ "hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Others say that, while there is, no doubt, a reference to the person and the resurrection of Christ, yet it is not so vivid as some seem to think.

Personally, I am quite satisfied with the translation given in our Authorized Version; yet it has occurred to me that, possibly, Job himself may not have known the full meaning of all that he said. Imagine the patriarch driven into a corner, badgered by his so-called friends, charged by them with all manner of evils until he is quite boiling over with indignation, and, at the same time, smarting under terrible bodily diseases and the dreadful losses which he has sustained; and, at last, he bursts out with this exclamation, "I shall be vindicated one day; I am sure I shall. I know that my Vindicator liveth. I am sure that, there is One who will vindicate me; and if he never clears my name and reputation as long as I live, it will be done afterwards. There must be a just God, in heaven, who will see me righted; and even though worms devour my body until the last relic of it has passed away, I do verily believe that, somehow, in the far-off ages, I shall be vindicated." He, throws his faith forward to some tremendous era which he anticipates, and he declares that there will be found then, as he believes there is alive even now, a Goel, a Kinsman, an Avenger, who will stand up for him, and set right all this wrong. He cannot conceive that God will permit such gross injustice to be done as for a man, who has walked as he has walked, to be brought so low, and then to be stung with such unfounded accusations; he is positive that there must be a Vindicator for him somewhere, and he appeals to that last dread tribunal, which he dimly sees in the far-off future, and he believes that someone will be found to stand up successfully for him there.

If that be the case, you will see that Job was driven, perhaps beyond his former knowledge, by his very pains and trials. He may but dimly have perceived a future state, but his condition revealed to him the necessity for such a state. He felt that, if the righteous suffer so much in this life, often apparently without any just cause, and if the wicked prosper, then there must be another state in which God will set right the wrongs of this, and rectify the apparent inequalities of his providence here. Job realized that; and, possibly, his deep griefs may have been the channel of another revelation

to him, namely, that there was a mysterious Divine Being, concerning whom that dark prophecy had been handed down from the garden of Eden itself, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." He felt sure that, for those who were wronged as he had been, there must be an Advocate provided. He had before complained that there was no Umpire—no "Daysman"—to stand between them both; but now he asks for an Advocate, and he feels that there must be one, yea, he knows that there is, and he declares that, somewhere or other, there is an Advocate who will, some day or other, set right all that concerns him, let things go now as they may. So, possibly, Job was seeing more than he had ever seen before of that mysterious One who pleads the cause of those who are oppressed, and shows himself strong, on their behalf, at the right hand of God.

I am not going to enter into any discussion of the matter, but shall use the passage in the full Evangelical sense. Job may have known all that we now know concerning Christ, for he may have had special revelations and manifestations. We do not find all that we know in his Book, yet he may have meant all that I shall say in this discourse. If he did not mean it, I trust that we shall, under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I. I shall speak first upon this point,—JOB HAD A TRUE FRIEND AND HIS MISTAKEN FRIENDS.

These men were miserable comforters, but Job had a real Comforter, they were estranged from him, but he had a true Friend left; so he said, "I know that my Goel liveth." That is the Hebrew word; I suppose you all know that it means the person nearest akin to him, who, because he was nearest akin, was bound to take up his cause. If a man was slain by misadventure, the goel pursued the one who had slain him, and endeavored to avenge his death. If a person fell into debt, and was sold into slavery because of the debt, his goel, if he was able, had to redeem him; and hence we get the word "redeemer." Or if estates became mortgaged through poverty, it was the duty of the next of kin to redeem them, if possible; so again we get the idea of redeemer. But the word "goel" is more comprehensive than the word redeemer, so we will begin with its first meaning.

Job, in the midst of his false friends, had *One whom he called his kinsman*. "I know," he said, "that my Kinsman liveth." We interpret that word "Kinsman" as meaning our Lord Jesus Christ, and we sing,—

"Jesus, our Kinsman and our God,  
Arrayed in majesty and blood,  
Thou art our life, our souls in thee  
Possess a full felicity."

I want you, just now, to think of Jesus Christ as your Kinsman if you are really in him, for he is indeed the nearest akin to you of any,—bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same." Now, your own flesh and blood, as you call them, are not so near to you in real kinship as Jesus is; for, often, you will find flesh and blood near akin by birth but not by sympathy. Two brothers may be, spiritually, very different from one another, and may not be able to enter into each other's trials at all; but this Kinsman participates in every pang that rends your heart; he knows your constitution, your weakness, your sensitiveness, the particular trial that cuts you to the quick, for in all your afflictions he was afflicted. Thus he is nearer to you than the nearest of earthly kin can possibly be, for he enters more fully into the whole of your life; he seems to have gone through it all, and he still goes through it all in his constant sympathy with you.

Christ's kinship with his people is to be thought of with great comfort because it is voluntary. We have some, perhaps, who are akin to us, yet, who wish they were not. Many a time, when a rich man has poor relations, he is half ashamed of the kinship between them, and wishes that it did not exist. Shame upon him for thinking so! But our Lord Jesus Christ's relationship to us is no accident of birth; it was voluntarily assumed by him. He would be one with us because he loved us; nothing could satisfy him till he had come to this earth, and been made one flesh with his Church. "For this cause," it is said concerning marriage, "shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery," said Paul; "but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." And, verily, so was it with Christ, as the poet sings,—

"'Yea,' saith the Lord, 'with her I'll go  
Through all the depths of care and woe;  
And on the cross will even dare  
The bitter pangs of death to bear.'"

This he did because he would be one flesh with his people, and that is a very near kinship which comes as close as that, and which willingly does so,—not by force; but by voluntary choice.

And, further, this is a kinship of which Jesus is never ashamed. We have known or heard of the prosperous man who has been ashamed of his poor old mother, and of the educated young man who has looked down with scorn upon the very father who has toiled and slaved in order to give him the advantages of such an education. It is disgraceful that there should ever be such ingrates; but it is written concerning our great Kinsman, "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." He declares to the whole universe, concerning those persecuted ones, those who are ridiculed as being fools, "They are my brethren." The Prince of glory, whose fingers are adorned with stars of light like rings of priceless value, calls the poor bedridden woman, who, is a child of God, his sister, and calls the humble, toiling, laboring man, who walks with him, his brother; and he is not ashamed to do so. Think, beloved, with intensest gratitude, of this great Kinsman of yours, who is so near of kin to you,—voluntarily near of kin, and not ashamed to own the kinship.

Remember, too, that your Kinsman liveth in this respect,—that he will always be your Kinsman. The closest ties of earthly relationship must, to a great extent, end in death, for there are no husbands and wives, as such, in heaven. There cannot be, "for in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." There are other ties, of a spiritual kind, that, will far outshine the best of bonds that linked us together here; but, when all other ties are broken, Jesus will always be our Kinsman, our Brother. We shall find the fraternal relationship better understood, more fully enjoyed, and more clearly manifested up there than it ever can be here. When all other relationships are growing dim, this blessed eternal kinship will shine out the more brightly. So I want all of you, who truly love, the Lord Jesus Christ, to interpret my text in this way: "I know that my Kinsman liveth," and to feel how honored you are to have such a Kinsman as Christ is. Ruth was highly privileged in having such a kinsman as Boaz, who was not content, for her to glean in his fields, but who took her as his wife; and your great Kinsman intends that you should be betrothed unto him for ever, and he will bring you to his heavenly home at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

There was a second meaning to the word *goel*, arising out of the first,—*Job's kinsman would become his Vindicator*. It was the kinsman's duty to defend the rights of his needy relative, so Job intended here to say, "I know that my Vindicator liveth;" and the Lord Jesus Christ is the Vindicator

of his people from all false charges. It is not easy for Christians to live in this world without being slandered and misrepresented; certainly, those of us who live in the full blaze of public life can hardly utter a word without having it twisted, and tortured, and misconstrued. We are often represented as saying what we loathe even to think; yet we must not be surprised at that. The world loves lying,—it always has done so, and it always will. Even in private life you may meet with similar cruel treatment; there are some of God's best children who lie under reproach by the year together. The very things which they would not tolerate for a moment are laid to their charge, and they are thought to be guilty of them, and even good people hold up their hands in pious horror at them, though they are perfectly innocent all the while. Well, beloved, ever remember that your Vindicator liveth. Do not, be too much concerned to clear your own character; above all, do not attempt to vindicate yours in a court of law, but say to yourself, "I know that my Vindicator liveth." When he cometh, "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." His people may be under a cloud now; but, when he appeareth, the cloud shall break, and their true glory shall be seen. The greater the obloquy under which any of us have unjustly lived on earth, the greater will be the joy and the honor which will be vouchsafed to us in the day when Christ shall clear our character from all the shameful aspersions that have been brought against us. All will be cleared up in that day, so leave the accusations alone, knowing that your Vindicator liveth.

There is another most comforting thought,—that our Vindicator will clear us from true charges as well as false ones. As for the false charges, what do they matter? It is the true ones that really concern us: can Christ clear us from them? Yes, that he can. Remember how the apostle John writes, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." You see, it is not merely, if we have been said to sin when we did not, but if we really sin, "we have an Advocate with the Father." O blessed Advocate, how dost thou clear thy people of the sin which they have actually committed? Why, in this way; he took it up himself,—the awful load of their guilt,—and suffered the full penalty for it. So there he stands before the eternal throne, to plead their cause; and, as he does so, he says, "Those sins, committed by my people,—I have taken them upon myself, and suffered in the room, and place, and stead of all who will believe in me." O thou blessed Kinsman, how glorious art thou in thy grace, in that thou hast so completely undertaken our cause that thou hast been made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in thee! Yes, beloved, Jesus will plead the merit of his precious blood and his spotless righteousness; and, before that powerful pleading, our sins and our transgressions shall sink beneath the flood, and shall not be remembered against us any more for ever.

In that day, too, our Vindicator will defend us against all the accusations of Satan. Our great adversary often assails and attacks us here, and the Lord says to him, as he did concerning Joshua the high priest, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee!" "We may tell the devil, when we stand foot to foot with him, and are sore beset, that our Vindicator liveth, and we may quote to him that grand promise, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly," because our Vindicator, who is to bruise the serpent's head, still liveth. The old serpent may nibble at your heel for a while, as he did at your Master's, but you, in the strength of your Lord, shall bruise his head; and whatsoever other adversary of your soul there may be, at any time, rest you in quiet confidence. Even if that adversary is permitted to prevail over you for a while, say unto him, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." So you have two meanings of the word goel,—my Kinsman, my Vindicator, liveth. I hope you who are greatly tempted and tried, and you

who are persecuted and oppressed, will catch that second meaning, and commit your cause unto God. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Be slow to anger; fret not yourselves because of the wicked man that prospereth in his evil way, and think not of being revenged upon your oppressors. In patience and quietness possess your souls, knowing that your time of vindication will surely come, for your Vindicator liveth.

Then the third meaning of the word *goel* certainly is redeemer, so Job could say, "*I know that my Redeemer liveth.*" As I have already said, the next of kin, in the process of vindicating his poor Kinsman, was accustomed to redeem him from bondage, or to redeem any part of his estate that might be under mortgage. So, let us next think of how the Lord Jesus Christ hath redeemed us from bondage. Having broken the law of God, we were in bondage to that law; we had received the spirit of bondage again to fear. But we, who have believed in Jesus, our Kinsman, can say that he hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, and that we are no longer in bondage. We were also in bondage under sin, as Paul wrote, "I am carnal, sold under sin;" but Christ has come, and broken the power of sin in us, so that its reigning power is subdued; and though it still striveth to get the mastery, and often maketh us to groan within ourselves, even as Paul did, yet do we, with him, thank God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

There are two redemptions,—redemption by price and redemption by power, and both of these Christ hath wrought for us;—by price, by his sacrifice upon the cross of Calvary; and by power, by his Divine Spirit coming into our heart, and renewing our soul. Ought we not unceasingly to bless the Lord who hath redeemed us from under the law, having paid the penalty for the commands which we had broken, and who hath also redeemed us from the power of sin? "I know that my Redeemer liveth," then I know that I am a free man; for if the Son makes us free, then are we free indeed. I know that he paid the price for my soul's eternal redemption, then may my soul continually exult in him, and rejoice in the liberty wherewith he hath made me free.

But, as I have already reminded you, the redeemer was also accustomed to redeem the estate as well as the person of his kinsman. We had lost everything. Father Adam had put everything under a heavy mortgage, and we could not even meet the interest on it; but the whole estate is unmortgaged now, even to paradise itself. Does someone ask, "Is there not any mortgage even upon paradise?" I answer,—No; for Christ said to the dying thief, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise;" so it is clear that he has entered paradise, and claimed it on his people's behalf. Jesus Christ hath said, in the words of the psalmist, "I restored that which I took not away." Bankrupt debtors, through the Lord's sovereign grace, you are no longer under any liabilities because of your sin if Christ be accepted by you as your *Goel* and Redeemer. He hath restored to you the estates which your first father, Adam, had lost; and he hath made you heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, through the wondrous redemption which he wrought for you upon the cross of Calvary.

Suck the honey, if you can, out of these three glorious truths, and you will be able to do so in proportion as you can personally use the words of the text, "'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' I know that he lives who will vindicate my character, and rectify my wrongs. I know, too, that he lives who hath redeemed me from sin and hell; and even though I die, I know that he will redeem me from the power of the grave, and that he will enable me to say, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?'"

Dwell on the remembrance that you have such a Divine Helper, and then let us pass on to another thought, at which I will only briefly hint as I proceed to another part of my theme.

## II. The second point, is this,-JOB HAD REAL PROPERTY AMID ABSOLUTE POVERTY.

Job had lost everything,—every stick and stone that he possessed, he had lost his children, and he had lost his wife, too, for all practical purposes, for she had not acted like a wife to him in his time of trial. Poor Job, he had lost everything else, but he had not lost his Redeemer. Notice, he does not say, "I know that my wife and my children live;" but he says, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Ah! "my Redeemer,"—he has not lost him, so he has the best of all possessions still left. Looking up to him, by faith, with the tears of joy standing in his eyes, he says, "Yes, he is my Redeemer, and he still lives; I accept him as mine, and I will cling to him for ever." Can you, beloved friends, not merely rejoice in Christ as *the* Redeemer, but also as *your* Redeemer? Have you personally accepted him as your Redeemer? Have you personally trusted him with your soul, wholly and really; and do you already feel in your own heart, a kinship to this great Kinsman, a trust in this great Vindicator, a reliance upon his great redemption? Another man's redemption is of no value to my soul; the sweetness lies in the little word "*my*"—"my Redeemer." Luther used to say that the marrow of the gospel is found in the pronouns, and I believe it is: "*my* Redeemer." Say, with me, each one of you for himself or herself,—

"My faith would lay her hand  
On that dear head of thine,  
While like a penitent I stand,  
And there confess *my* sin.  
"My soul looks back to see  
The burdens thou didst bear,  
When hanging on the cursed tree  
And hopes *her* guilt was there."

If you really do rely upon Christ's atoning sacrifice, and so take him as your Redeemer, you may not only hope your guilt was there, but you may know that it was. There, poor man, you may not have a penny in your pocket, but if you can truly say, "my Redeemer," you are infinitely better off than a millionaire who cannot say that. Thou, who knowest not where thou wilt have a lodging to-night, if thou canst truly say, "my Redeemer," thou needest not envy the very angels of God, for, in this respect, thou art ahead even of them, for they can call him "Lord", but not "Redeemer." He is not so near akin to them as he is to thee, "for verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." He took your nature and mine, beloved, for Christ became a man.

So Job had something real and valuable left even when he had lost all his property.

III. Thirdly, Job seems to lay stress upon the word "liveth": "I know that my Redeemer *liveth*." This teaches us that JOB HAD A LIVING KINSMAN AMID A DYING FAMILY.

All his children were dead. We cannot easily estimate the full force of that blow upon the patriarch's heart. The loss of one child is a very painful event, even when the child is a very little one, and the parents have many others left; but it is a far worse bereavement when the children, who are taken away, are grown up, as Job's were. They were evidently a very united family, who used to meet in each other's houses for mutual fellowship. They seem to have been a very happy family, and they were certainly a family under very gracious influences, for Job was accustomed, after their days of festival, to offer sacrifices for them, lest they should have sinned against the Lord. Altogether, it was a fine family,—seven sons and three daughters;—and now they were all gone at once! To lose all one's family at once, like that, is a heavy stroke that nose can measure but

those who have felt it. All were! gone,—the whole ten at once! That was sad for poor Job, but it was most blessed that he was able to say, "Though my children are all dead, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' He, is not dead, and in him I find more than all that I have lost."

Look at your Lord, dear friend, if you are mourning, just now, the sons of loved ones, and see whether he is not better to you than ten sons and daughters. See whether there is not, in his heart, room enough for that affection, which has been so rudely snapped, to grow again. The tendrils of your soul want something to cling to, and to twist around; then let them swine around him. Rejoice that he lives in a dying world. If you walk through the cemetery, or stand by the open grave, how blessedly these words seem to fall upon your spirit, like the music of angels, "These are dead, but 'I know that *my Redeemer liveth,*'—liveth on, liveth in power, liveth in happiness, liveth with a life which he communicates to all who trust him. He lives, and therefore I shall live with him. He lives, and therefore the dead, who are in him, shall live for ever." O blessed truth!

You will yourself die soon, dear friend; no, I must correct myself, you will not *die*, for it is not death for one who knows the Saviour to die. You will fall asleep in him, one of these days, at the very hour that God has appointed; and when you open your eyes, it will not be in the narrow death-chamber, you will not be on the bed of sickness. Methinks you will be startled to find yourself amid such new surroundings. "What is this I hear?" you will say. "Such music as this has never charmed me before, and what is that I see?". "But you will not need to enquire, for you will know *that* face at once. You knew, while on earth, that Jesus still lived; but you will know it better then, when you lay aside these heavy optics that do but dim our sight, and get into the pure spirit state, and then see HIM. Oh, the bliss of that first sight of Christ! It seems to me as if that would gather up an eternity of delight into a single moment; that first glimpse of him will be enough to make us swoon away with excessive rapture. I do verily think that some, saints, whom I have known, have done just that,—swooned away with the excess of joy that they have felt in their departing moments. I have, sounding in my ears just now, the voice of a dear brother, by whose bedside I sate for a little while before I came to this service. He said to me, "I shall be home to-night, pastor. I wanted to see your face once more before I went; but I shall be home to-night, and see the face of Jesus." I hope you will all be prepared to die after that fashion. The godly old negro said, "Our minister is dying full of life." That is the way to die,—full of life. Because Jesus lives, we shall live also, and we may well die full of life because of our union to him.

IV. The last thought I want to leave with you is this, **JOB HAD ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY AMID UNCERTAIN AFFAIRS.**

He said, "*I know* that my Redeemer liveth." Why, Job, I should have thought you would not have known anything for certain now. I should not have liked to insure Job's sheep, and oxen, and asses, and camels, or the houses in which his children met together to feast. Nothing seemed to be certain with Job but uncertainty; yet there was one thing, concerning which he felt that he could put his foot down firmly, and say, "*I know.*" The winds may rage, and the tempests roar, but they cannot shake this rock. 'I know.' 'I know.' 'I know.'" Beloved, is everything uncertain with you in this world? Of course it is, for it is so with everybody. But does it appear to be more uncertain with you than it does with anybody else? Does your business seem to be slipping away, and every earthly comfort be threatening to disappear? Even if it is so, there is, nevertheless, something that is certain, something, that is stable,—Jesus your Redeemer lives. Rest on him, and you will never fail. Let your faith in him be firm, and confident; you cannot be too fully established in the belief that Jesus, who once died, has left the grave, to die no more, and that you, in him, must also live eternally.

Something may be wrong with you, for the next few days or weeks, but all is right with you for ever, and "all's well that ends well." There may be some rough water to be crossed between here and the fair havens of eternal felicity, but all is right there for ever and ever. There may be losses and crosses, there may be tossings and shipwrecks, but all is right for ever with all who are in Christ Jesus. "Some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship,"—but all who are in Christ Jesus shall escape "safe to land." There are uncertainties innumerable, but there is this one certainty: "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end." Spring on this rock, man! If you are struggling in the sea, just now, and waves of sin and doubt beat over you, leap on to this rock, Jesus lives. Trust the living Christ; and, because he lives, you shall live also. I could cheerfully take my place with Job, if I might be able to say as confidently as he did, "I know that my Redeemer liveth;" and if you, as a poor sinner, are trusting wholly and only in Christ, then he is your Redeemer, and you are saved for ever. If he is the only hope that you have, and you cling to him as the limpet clings to the rock, then all is right with you for ever, and you may know that he is your Redeemer as surely as Job knew that he was his. The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

JOB 19.

Verses 1, 2. *Then, Job answered and said, how long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?*

They struck at him with their hard words, as if they were breaking stones on the roadside. We ought to be very careful what we say to those who are suffering affliction and trial, for a word, though it seems to be a very little thing, will often cut far more deeply and wound far more terribly than a razor would. So Job says, "How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?"

3. *These ten times have ye reproached me: ye are not ashamed that ye make yourselves strange to me.*

He means that they had reproached him several times over, and hints that they ought to have been ashamed to act so strangely, so coldly, so untenderly, towards him.

4. *And be it indeed that I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself.*

"I have done you no harm. The error, if error there be, is within my own bosom, for you cannot find anything in my life to lay to my charge." Happy is the man who can say as much as that.

5, 6. *If indeed ye will magnify yourselves against me, and plead against me my reproach: know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net.*

Job seems to say, "I did not bring this trouble upon myself; it is God who has laid it upon me. Take heed lest, in reproaching me because of my trouble, you should reproach God also. "I suppose that we cannot, all of us, see into the inner meaning of these words, but if we are in very sore trouble, and those who ought to comfort us are bringing gruel accusations against us, we shall read the language of Job with no small sympathy and satisfaction.

7. *Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment.*

Poor Job! When our prayer is not heard, or we think it is not, then the clouds above us are dark indeed. You who are passing through a season of unanswered prayer, do not imagine that you are the first to traverse that dreary way! You can see the footprints of others on that desolate sandy shore. Job knew what that experience meant, so did David, and so did our blessed Lord. Read the 2nd verse of the 22nd Psalm, and hear Jesus say, "O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent."

8. *He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths.*

God had done this, and done it to Job, whom he called "a perfect and an upright man." Then, how can you and I expect to escape trial and difficulty when such a man as the patriarch of Uz found his road blocked up, and darkness all around him?

9, 10. *He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath he removed like a tree.*

That is, torn up by the roots, and carried down the stream, to be forgotten by the people who once knew it, and rejoiced in its welcome shade.

11. *He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him as one of his enemies.*

Does God ever act like that towards his own children? Yes; there are times when, without any anger in his heart, but with designs of love toward them, he treats his children, outwardly, as if he were an enemy to them. See the gardener going up to that beautiful tree. He takes out a sharp knife, feels its edge to be sure that it is keen, and then he begins pruning it here, gashing it there, and making it to bleed in another place, as if he were going to cut it all to pieces. Yet all that is not because he has any anger against the tree, but, on the contrary, because he greatly values it, and wishes it to bring forth more fruit than it has ever done. Do not think that God's sharpest knife means death to his loved ones; it means more life, and richer, fuller life.

12. *His troops come together, and raise up their way against me, and encamp round about my tabernacle.*

Troops of trouble, troops of Chaldeans and Sabeans, troops in which Job counted the stormy winds as terrible allies of the Most High,—all these had come up against Job, and he seemed to be like a country that is beaten down and devoured by powerful invaders.

13. *He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me.*

He looks on those so-called "friends" of his, and, remembering the bitter things they had said, he tells them that they are estranged from him.

14, 15. *My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight.*

What a long way a child of God may be permitted to go in trouble! Ah, brethren! we do not know how those, who are most dear to God's heart, may suffer all the more for that very reason: "for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

16, 17. *I called my servant, and he gave me no answer; I intreated him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife, though I intreated for the children's sake of mine own body.*

He mentioned to his wife those whom death had taken away, and asked her to speak kindly to him; but even she had hard words to throw in his teeth.

18-20. *Yea, young children despised me; I arose, and they spake against me. All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me. My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.*

There is no skin upon the teeth, or scarcely any, and, therefore, Job means that there was next to nothing of him left, like the skin of his teeth.

21. *Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.*

How pitiful it is that he has thus to beg for sympathy! This strong man—this most patient man—this perfect and upright man before God has to ask for sympathy. Do you wonder that it was so? HE, who was far greater than Job, ran back thrice to his sleeping disciples as if he needed some help from them, yet he found it not, for he had to say to them, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" "Let this be a lesson to us to try and possess bowels of compassion towards those who are in sorrow and distress.

22. *Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?*

"If God smites me, why do you, who are round about me, do the same? Is it not enough that God seems to be turned against me? Why should you also be my enemies?"

23, 24. *Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!*

Inscriptions have been found, graven in the rocks, that may have been done in the time of Job, and it was common, in ancient days, to write on tablets of lead or brass; so Job desired that what he was saying might be recorded for future reference, for he was persuaded that he was being hardly dealt with, and unjustly judged.

25. *For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:*

"For I know," What a splendid burst of confidence this is, right out of the depth of his sorrow, like some wondrous star that suddenly blazes upon the brow of the blackest night, or like the sudden rising of the morning sun!

26-28. *And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me. But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?*

Job seems to say, speaking about himself, though in the third person, "He is a devout man, can you not see that? He has faith in God, my friends, can you not perceive that? Wherefore, then, do you persecute him so?"

29. *Be ye afraid of the sword: for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment.*

Now Job carries the war into the enemy's camp; and he says, "You charge me with all sorts of sin, and yet you cannot deny that the root of the matter is in me. Would it not be much wiser for you to be yourselves afraid lest God should cut you off for falsely accusing me, and slandering me, in the time of my sorrow?" There we may confidently leave Job for the man who can truly say what he has said about his Redeemer, will come out all right at the last.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—412, 326; AND FROM "SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS"—25.

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